JAKE

BY EUNICE TIETJENS

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TO JAKE

You are turned wraith. Your supple, flitting hands,
As formless as the night wind's moan,
Beckon across the years, and your heart's pain
Fades surely as a stained stone.

And yet you will not let me rest, crying
And calling down the night to me
A thing that when your body moved and glowed,
Living, you could not make me see.

Lean down your homely, mist-encircled head
Close, close above my human ear,
And tell me what of pain among the dead—
Tell me, and I will try to hear.

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BOOK THE FIRST

DAWN

JAKE

CHAPTER I

JAKE has been dead ten years this month. It must be nearly eleven since I saw him, and I do not even know where his grave was dug. Long ago I lost touch with Carla his wife. So that all the threads of his story are gone out of my hands.

All that remains to me is a small collection of those singularly persevering objects which are left when the hand that made them has long been quiet—a casual letter or so, a few humorous sketches and a book of children's stories with rather bad illustrations by "Jacob Abraham Gilroy."

Yet some part of Jake has not died, and cannot. There is a quality of eternality in pain, in pain met and endured, in the pitiful and beautiful human facing of pain with humor.

And these things were part of Jake. These things are with me still.

Not that Jake haunts me in the ordinary sense of the word. His spirit was too gentle, too unassuming, too thoughtful of others to do anything so positive as to haunt one. He would, I think, be genuinely sorry that I remember aught of him but the sense of comradeship, the many pleasant hours we had together in the days when we were both young enough so that the mere surface of life, the being alive and well on a sunny day, the reading of a good yarn or the sight of the delectable knees of musical comedy were enough to make us forget the tragic frame of life.

Yet I cannot forget Jake's story; and as I have grown older and come to understand more of the devious ways of fate, his story has emerged more and more clearly into my consciousness. It used to be for me a series of incidents, of gay or sorrowful patches of color without much continuity or pattern. But now it emerges as a whole. And I have been increasingly conscious in a vague and formless way that some day I must face this story of

Jake, must wrestle with it and try to make of it something other than the inarticulate cry of pain it has become for me. Unfaced it has grown too large in my inner life. It has become too cosmic. It has come to stand for the unendurable pain of the spirit. Faced, it may be —nay, it must be—that there is healing in it.

Yet I was busy; I have my husband and the children, and time is difficult to come at, time in which to think. I dallied; I put off thinking. And then the other day an incident occurred which crystallized for me the necessity of it. Let a better psychologist than I am tell why this incident which seems so separate, should have connected itself in my mind with the story of Jake. I only know it did so.

The other day it fell to my lot to drown a puppy dog. It was Betty's puppy. I stole out at dawn while the children were still sleeping. As I opened the door Betty's little white body turned uneasily under its canopy of mosquito netting, and one slim arm, that already is taking on the contour of a woman's, curved under her towsled head.

The dawn was clear and tranquil and in-

finitely spacious, a June dawn heralding a June day. The sun rose clean, with only a slight golden haze about it, and the light spread slowly over the great tawny, virgin dunes, like animals asleep—their smooth flanks, of the color and texture of the skin of the Orient, broken now and again by dead and blackened skeletons of trees. The wild roses before my door were delicately fragrant. As far as the eye can see there is no sign of man, only rearing dunes, and beach, and the curve of the lake, shoreless like a sea. I am happy here.

The puppy, in spite of the eye infection which had already made it nearly blind, and which, lest the children catch it here in the wilds; necessitated the death of the poor creature, the puppy gamboled a little in the dawn. We slid down our dune through the blue crystal air and into the bluer crystal water, as cold as the shock of silver bells.

The creature died so easily! It batted a little, ineffectually, with its feet, and sent up gasping bubbles. Then it jerked a while and was dead.

And I, who had never killed anything large

enough to have a personality before, though many times I have seen death strike, I grew suddenly strangely detached. Never had beauty bitten into me more keenly. Never had the dawn been so beautiful as I saw it, standing waist-deep in the crystal water, holding down the squirming puppy. Never were colors more tender and more rapturous, or the sweep of my dunes more breath-taking. I know not why this should have been, but so it was.

It was one of the high spots of my life. The long agony of the war, the patient boys in my hospital who, after endless ages of pain had gone forth alone into the dawn, into such dawns as this or into the bleak rains of winter mornings, the friend I had seen on a bleak hillside blown to pieces for tampering with an unexploded hand-grenade,—these things had been too near to me. They had only hurt me unutterably. But this half-blind puppy whom my own hands were killing grew suddenly into a symbol of death. I went with him a little way beyond the gate. The unspeakable loveliness, the ecstasy of beauty which is at the heart of this our mystery of life and death descended

upon me. Something in me that is usually solid seemed to melt, so that I stood trembling in a passion of revelation, and a cry that was a formless hymn in praise of death sang in my throat.

And as I knew that death is not the enemy, so I knew that pain is. And that one is not grown to full stature till one has met pain—not in oneself, for that is relatively simple, a mere gritting of the teeth of the will; I know for having met it—but in others, in the heart and the flesh of one's brother.

Then I came out of the water, spaded up a place in the sand, and went in to face the wails of Betty, whose rounded arms already are taking on the contour of a woman's.

Revelation is in itself a liberating thing, though the liberation take an unexpected form. I have made time for Jake.

Yet I hardly know how to face it, how to get it down. I am so inexperienced in these things. And this is not my own story. This is his story, the record of a life accursed.

My own story is a pleasant one, uneventful, almost, except in those quiet, deep-flowing ways

that make for happiness and for peace; the quiet ways of wifehood and motherhood, in sheltered surroundings, in a land of plenty. The fates have been kind to me. They have given me a healthy body, a pair of eyes to see, and hope to look out upon. Only once has tragedy of my own cut across my life, and that was so many years ago that it has melted gently into the tapestry, and has served me really more as a touchstone to understand others' pain than as a great sorrow of my own.

But running parallel with my life, since I was a very little girl, has run this other life, this life of Jake's. He has been dead ten years, but even now the figure holds. His life runs parallel to mine.

Yet singularly enough for an influence as real as Jake's has been on me, our lives never touched, never in any real sense. His story never, even for an hour, became my story. We knew one another, we were friends, I watched him struggling against himself at times at my very elbow. But that was all.

I saw his life as one sees a countryside through the gaps in a picket fence, seeing it, yet

outside of it. Or more nearly as one sees a stream flowing through a woodland when one walks straight on, and the stream meanders and chuckles on its way, now curving nearer so that one walks on the pebbles of its shore, now pitching away out of sight, so that only its rushing comes across the forest glades.

There are gaps like this in Jake's life for me, things I did not see. Some of these gaps have been bridged a little by words, so that I know dimly what went on in them. Some of them have not been bridged at all, so that I can only guess. And at the last, before his death, the stream turned abruptly away from me, and plunged apart into darkness. And when it came back it was only as a wraith, as a presence and a minor song.

This makes it hard to set down, to make coherent. And I can only do this, I think, by setting down also the pleasant paths in which I have walked myself, so that when I looked through the picket fence into Jake's kingdom you may know the land from which I looked, and so may see with my eyes. Jake, I think, would like it so, for, though when he was

caught like a wild thing between the steel claws of a trap he did not always tell the truth, yet at heart he was always honest, and above all things he loved honesty of the spirit.

He loved gaiety, too. He had the saving power of taking refuge in the moment, and of turning difficulties into a jest. One of the sketches that remains to me is a newspaper cartoon, done in his later years, just before the darkness closed in on him. It is called "It's an ill wind——" and it concerned a strike which tied up the stockyards. It shows three animals, a cow, a sheep and a pig, grinning with so abandoned an enthusiasm that even now I grin in response.

He met his own personal troubles with the same debonair gaiety. And he had a great fund of tenderness. My babies loved him and he was untiring in caring for them. I can see him now, his homely, lovable face wistfully tender, tramping the floor with a little colicky bundle that squirmed over his shoulder with tiny squeals of pain.

"Poor little youngkit!" he would croon, "I know. I've smelled of peppermint myself.

But cheer up. By and by you'll grow big enough to have a few real troubles and then this won't matter a bit."

And he would croon some especially alluring bit from the "Ingoldsby Legends," embedding the leaping rhymes in a tuneless recitative of his own invention.

He had no children of his own. Carla, I think, didn't want to be bothered—though I may be wronging her.

His homeliness was an essential part of him. He always referred to himself as a fearsome example of how man should not look, and caricatured himself unmercifully. The modeling of his face was atrocious, and he swore that it took him twice as long as any one else to shave because he had so many little hillocks and depressions in his cheeks that he couldn't get over the surface without excavating.

But his eyes were the most expressive eyes I have ever seen, deep gray that darkened and cleared with his thoughts, and that could hold mirth or pain as a well holds water, steadily, completely. And his big, loose-hung mouth, though it showed the weakness of his will,

showed also the tenderness of his heart. And for all his homeliness everyone loved him, down to the waiters at the lunch counters.

Well—he's dead now, and the comeliness he didn't have and the beauty he worshiped and longed to create, but never could because he never had money enough to study, and the sweeping dreams which were the only free thing about him, these are gone, too—unless I can make you feel them a little across the years. It's worth trying at least.

I never loved Jake in the flesh. But his spirit is very near to me now.

CHAPTER II

I HAVE always been thankful for the village of my birth.

In a country and a region which dwells on the near rim of the future, looking always forward and taking small account of the blank wall of history before its own day, my village lives on the last rim of the past. It sits on its sunny vineyarded hills in sleepy contemplation of its own former greatness, sprawling contentedly in the frame of a city ten times its size.

It has less than a thousand people now and every year or so another family leaves, and another house joins the company of shuttered and voiceless shells from which life has retreated. Some of them are quite new and still hold the hope of ringing again with children's voices and the sounds of homely mirth. But many of them have lost hope long ago and are falling with a certain quiet dignity into the

realm of forgotten things. The yards and the paths about them are miniature jungles of weed and shrub and wildflower, and the houses themselves are gray skeletons with rotting floors, falling roofs and doors that creak eerily in the wind on rusty hinges. One of them has a closet with a secret passage that, village gossip has it, once led underground to no one knows where. They are marvelous places for childish dreams.

The village fronts the river, the great crawling yellow Mississippi, greater than the Yangtze, older than mankind. Sometimes it suns its idle length, hardly whispering as it moves, harmless and hot and familiar. One almost forgets it then. But at other times it comes down roaring with strange shapes and dimples on its surface where the current runs. It eats treacherously into the low-lying shore, it drowns the cattle, it fills the forest land so that one can row in a boat under the trees, and the wild things prisoned in the treetops, where they have fled for safety, grow bold and desperate. Little animals chatter furiously and long green and brown and black snakes hang down in festoons from the branches and threaten to drop into the.

boat. And at night the roaring and rushing is like a great wind. The river grows strange and mysterious then and grips the imagination in a grip that lasts a lifetime.

Once when I was a child they found at the bottom of a bluff near a village not far from us a bone of a pre-historic man, old, much older than the Indian folk who lived there afterwards. The editor of the village paper, who was quite an important person in the town and seemed to me very, very wise, told me about it. "Riverdrift man," he called the queer creature, and he told me how it used to squat there like an ape, afraid of everything but the river, in the days when the world was young. After that I used to lie long hours on my stomach—my childhood recollections are nearly all of lying on my stomach—and think about this strange being, and pretend I was he. And the river I knew must look now as it looked then.

At other times I dreamed I was Père Marquette, pushing northward through this green land, holding the cross aloft. And the river linked me with him, too.

I knew the captain of the ferry boat well, a

rough, kindly man with long hours to spend and many stories to tell, always stories of the river. He loved his stories so, and he loved idleness so, that even my childish attention would start him rambling on the old days when he was a river pilot and ran from New Orleans north to Minneapolis, and farther sometimes, up the beautiful country beyond. Poor man, he's dead, too, killed in a drunken brawl one stormy night. And the last time I went back I found that the great dam down stream had backed the water up so that his house is standing with its feet in the water, empty and breaking to pieces, with the front porch of the upper story sliding down into the stream and all his wife's careful vegetable patch a yellow pool.

And there was old Madame Martin, a French peasant woman with almost no teeth, who looked like a witch and was really curiously kind to a lonely child. In her youth she had lived in a French settlement in the town, and she, too, told me tales, in her queer accent, of quarreling and bickering and of the plague and of failure at last. What it was all about and why the people should have quarreled I

never rightly understood till I was older and found that she told of the French effort at communism, the Icarian settlement it was called, the frustrate dream of Etienne Cabet. It was they who had planted the old-world vineyards and built the great underground wine cellars, decayed and tumbling down, too, like the houses, that made such splendid robbers' caves.

For some reason which I cannot explain the days of greatness of the town itself, the heyday of the Mormons, when Joseph Smith and the youthful Brigham Young held high sway and laid out the frame of the town, the frame in which it sprawls so loosely, interested me less. Smith was either a martyr or a scalawag, I was sure, for the town said he was a villain, and a book I once found said he was a saint, and I knew he had been killed for being one or the other. But it was all too confusing for me to make much of it. Only, the stories of the Danites, the avenging band that slew by night, haunted me at times. And the name of the town was Smith's, too, "Nauvoo" it is. Smith said it was Sanskrit for "Pleasant Land," and I think he spoke true.

I am thankful, as I said, for my village. It was a wonderful setting for the long thoughts of childhood and it gave me early a sense of background, a feeling of being one of a long chain of human beings who would continue when I, too, was gone. This is the heritage that comes to children in the old countries, but seldom in this our United States.

My personal childhood seems, now that I look back upon it, to have been simple and pleasant and almost uneventful. My mind I think took little notice, beyond storing facts, of the events that happened immediately before it. It busied itself rather, as some children's do, with what was farther away, in the land of books, in the realm of the imagination. For it was chiefly the things of the imagination which I remember.

I had, of course, the usual procession of childhood friends,—Mabel Thompson, who had a brown, freckled face and a jolly laugh; Gwendolyn Dwight, slight and graceful and delicate, who danced divinely and was to my adoring eyes a sort of fairy creature. How is childhood deceived! For Gwendolyn after-

wards married a wealthy city man, thought too much about herself, became a hypochondriac and came down with nervous prostration because she had too little to think about!

My father and mother I took quite for granted. I loved them devotedly and almost never thought of them. Father was the banker of the town and much respected. Mother was very pretty, almost beautiful, with a quiet manner that covered a real fund of affection and sensitiveness. They were happy together.

In every childhood certain events stand out to our later contemplation with a curious aching distinctness that has little to do with their ultimate importance in our lives. They may or may not relate to the rest of life as we know it. They are sufficient in themselves, swift, isolated bits of consciousness. Such an event was my finding of Jake and my meeting, for the first time, the sense of pain which I always afterward felt in him.

It came about in this way.

My father was very fond of driving, always kept a pair of good horses and spent every possible Sunday afternoon driving about the coun-

tryside. One spring, when I was nine years old, finding opportunity for a little vacation, he decided to take mother and me in the buckboard and drive southward as close beside the river as might be. We would spend the nights where we could find shelter, take our time in the jaunting, and see what we should see.

For several days we jogged along pleasantly, watching the flowering countryside and enjoying being together and the gentle adventuring. It was like my father to take pleasure in these simple things.

Then one evening a violent storm came down upon us from the north. We had just crossed on a slight bridge the fork of a tributary river that flowed into our Mississippi and we found ourselves in a lonely region between two forks, less fertile than the surrounding country and more sparsely populated. Evening was coming down and we took refuge in an isolated farmhouse.

In that farmhouse I found Jake.

I don't, of course, remember these events in exactly the sequence I have set them down. That is the framework learned later. My re-

membrance is of a series of pictures, so vivid that they have never left me in the years that have followed.

The first picture is of spending the night with my mother in a strange room, an ugly, small room under the roof that sloped up sharply over the narrow bed in which we lay huddled. They had no guest room, the farmer's slovenly wife had told us, but "the orphan boy" would sleep on the kitchen floor and mother and I might have his room. I have no idea where father slept.

There were boyish trifles about the room, a few poor tools and some wooden toys he had been making, a bird's nest with some speckled eggs. There was also something that puzzled me, a tin can cover filled with burned sticks of wood. I wondered about it, till I saw that on the walls were several sketches in charcoal. To my eye they seemed very splendid for a boy to do. Perhaps they were. Jake had talent in his youth.

One of them I remember especially. It was a drawing of a young and rather charming woman with masses of dark, loosened hair and

large, dark, sentimental eyes. Her shoulders were bare and her hair spread over them and over the beginning of a round breast below. The drawing was crude enough, I suppose, yet it carried over to me. I knew afterwards that the woman was his mother.

There were also a few cheap and worn clothes, and protruding from under the bed a pair of very new, very stiff, very ugly shoes with copper toe protectors. I disliked the shoes from the instant I saw them. That dislike was the first basis of my friendship with Jake.

Outside the spring storm was rushing and beating. The house shook and rattled, the lightning crashed blindingly and the beat of the torrents of rain on the roof over my head was deafening. And the roof leaked, so that a thin stream of water came through onto the foot of the bed. My mother took the tin wash-basin and laid it on the bed to catch the worst of it, and all night long behind all the other noises was the thin tinkle of water dripping on tin.

I lay in a panic of fear, covering my head with the blanket and shivering. And only after

what seemed to me hours did I fall asleep with my head snuggled into my mother's neck.

The next morning the storm had abated a little, though it still rained persistently. It was impossible for us to leave, and when the farmer came in with the news that the stream had swept away not only the light bridge we had crossed but a similar one on the other fork, we knew we must make the best of stopping here a day or so.

Exactly how long we stayed I do not know, nor just what we did. I have only pictures to go by.

But Jake I remember as though I saw him now. He was about thirteen I should say, rather tall for his age, shambling, and strikingly ugly. He was barefoot and his clothes had a casual air as though they did not matter in his universe.

Yet his gray eyes looked so straight into mine, with such an engaging smile of frank pleasure in the luck that had brought me there, that I made friends with him at once.

"I think your drawings are splendid," I an-

nounced with the directness of childhood, "but I don't like your ugly shoes a bit."

If I had needed an open sesame, here it was.

Jake told me about himself—and the shoes. He was still smarting under the sting of them. Even in after years when we spoke of them he would twist his loose mouth into a wry smile at the remembrance.

He was not, it seemed, altogether an orphan. His father was dead but his mother was living, and the love of her was his one great passion. She was too poor to keep him, so she had farmed him out till he should be old enough to support himself at something better. He longed passionately for the day of deliverance. It would be soon, he said. He was past thirteen and on his fourteenth birthday she was coming for him. Then they would go away together and be happy. A deep light of hope glowed in his eyes when he spoke of it.

But he didn't want to go quite empty-handed. He wanted a present to take with him. And for nearly two years he had been saving for it. He received no pay, of course, for his work on the farm, only his keep and his clothes. But oc-

casionally "she," and he jerked his head towards the farmer's slovenly wife, would give him a few pennies or a nickel. And now and then he earned a bit outside. Once a city man had given him a whole quarter for helping him with a broken wheel. All this he had saved scrupulously—for his mother.

And then one day the farmer found the money. Jake kept it in an old sock under his bed, and the farmer had come up for something, poked under the bed and heard it chinking. He came down with the sock in his hand. Jake didn't tell me how he felt. There was no need.

"Pooh!" said the farmer. "Silly nonsense to spend it for your mother. You need shoes. I'll buy 'em with this." And he had gone to town and returned with the ugly copper-toed things.

Jake's eyes were full of a hurt rebellion.

"How mean!" I burst out. "How horribly, horribly mean! Does he always treat you like that?"

"Oh, he's always mean. He beats me sometimes. But it isn't that I mind; it's the other

things,—the things he does. But she's good enough to me. I think she's sorry for me. And I get along some way. My mother will come for me before very long. Come out and look at the farm."

We went out into a wet, washed world, for I can still remember the greenness and the fragrance of it. The little creek behind the house was rushing like the river and we couldn't find in the stirred water the crawfish Jake wanted to show me nor the little limber minnows that glide like shadows. But there were the horses and the chickens and the vegetable garden, and the windmill that pumped water. And last of all there were the hogs.

It was here that I met pain for the first time, the unendurable pain in another.

Jake had been very jolly since we left the house, laughing and cutting capers for my benefit in the wet spring sunshine. And I was flattered in a way by the attentions of so big a boy, four whole years older than I. It was all very pleasant after the terror of the storm.

Even when we first saw the hogs I didn't notice anything. They were in a pen with a high

strong fence so that I had to stand on a big stone to see them properly. Big, savage, grunting fellows they were, three of them, champing and munching. They frightened me and I glanced at Jake.

He was standing beside me looking down at them with a queer, dull face. Something told me that he stood often so.

"Be careful!" he warned me. "They ate a baby once."

His voice added to the shock. It was a dead voice, flat and dull as the sound of wood beaten. In after years I knew it well.

"It was a negro baby," he went on. "Its mother fed it to them. But I think it was dead."

The stench of the pen sickened me and I grew dizzy standing there on the stone, so that I clutched the fence for support. But Jake didn't notice me. He was looking down at the hogs and talking as horror drives one to talk, horror that will not let one stop talking.

"Her name was Blanche," he said. "She was the hired girl here when I first came. She slept in the loft beside my room and one night I

heard her crying in the darkness. She groaned, too, and once she gave a terrible gasp. After that she was still and I fell asleep again.

"In the morning she didn't come down and the farmer sent me to call her. She was lying there, quite dead, with the scissors sticking out of the front of her."

"The scissors!"

"Yes, she stuck them straight into her heart. I don't see how she could do it, but she did. It must have hurt awfully. Her face"—for the first time the dead voice quivered a little—"her face was terrible, with her eyes all rolled up and the white showing in her black face. . . ."

I fell off the stone.

In an instant Jake was beside me, picking me up, brushing my dress with his hands and talking to me in a voice grown alive again and pitiful.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" he cried. "I've hurt you telling about it. I never should have told a girl. I'm awful sorry. Please forgive me."

What happened then I don't know. But I know from that instant I wanted only one

thing, to get away, to go home where things didn't hurt me.

But I had touched Jake's life. I was not to go so easily. There is one more picture.

I've wondered since where my mother and father were when it happened. There were so few places to go on the farm. And I know that mother, when she found me afterwards, crying and shaking uncontrollably, reproached herself bitterly for having left me even for a few minutes. But I cannot see that she was to blame. And I was not in the least danger.

Jake and I had gone back into the living-room of the farmhouse. It was dusk by this time and a little chilly. The room looked warm and light and cheerful, and there was a fire burning on the hearth. The farmer's wife was stirring about and the farmer sat at a table, eating his supper. I was tired and my mind kept going back to the baby and the hogs. I sat down on a little bench beside the fire while Jake went to help the farmer's wife.

Presently I took to watching the farmer as he sat at his meal. He ate terribly, it seemed to me, stuffing great hunks of meat into his

mouth with his knife and making a great noise about it. He had something in a black bottle that he washed it down with and he made a noise at drinking, too. When he had satisfied his hunger he sat back with a sort of leer on his face and began to talk to me, asking me if I didn't like his farm and his fine hogs.

I tried to answer politely, but I was suddenly terrified by him and by everything about him and I'm afraid I made poor work of it. He didn't seem to notice it though and leered at me genially.

It's a curious thing that although that farmer haunted my youth like a black terror and returned again and again in my dreams when I was ill later, I can only remember two things about him, his eyes and his hands—these and his leer.

His eyes were small and dark and very cruel. They had a glint in them like a cat's eyes, though they were set forward in his head in dark pouches of flesh. Now they were gleaming with an animal satisfaction of warmth and food and the black bottle.

His hands he used a great deal, moving them

about in awkward, sweeping gestures and wiping his mouth with the back of them. They were large hands, tanned a dark red brown by the weather. They were covered with coarse black hair that ran up in almost a thicket into his shirt sleeves. The fingers were squat and heavy, square across the ends. When he bent them to take hold of anything, he seemed to bend them from the third joint, where the fingers join the palm, and hardly to move the other joints at all. It was very awkward.

Presently he got up, still leering, and went to a corner of the room where he got something I had not noticed before, a huge rat trap with a live rat in it. It was a trap that caught the prey alive, shut in a sort of cage. The rat blinked at him with its wicked little eyes and shrank into the far corner of its prison.

I had always been terrified by rats. I crouched away into the angle by the fire with a little scream.

The farmer reassured me.

"Don't be afraid, little girl," he said. "It's a horrid critter, but I'm going to kill it. You'll like to see that."

He set the trap on the floor and fetched a pitchfork with sharp tines close together. This he held poised in his hairy hands just above the door of the cage and with his foot he pushed back the protruding rod that opened the door.

After an instant's hesitation the rat made a dart for liberty. But the farmer was too quick for it. With almost incredible speed the awkward hands flashed down the pitchfork. The rat was spitted clean. It squealed in agony and tried to bite the steel tines.

The farmer laughed.

Then he came over quickly to the fire where I was sitting. I was too frozen with terror to move and I watched him like a hypnotized bird. The cruel eyes blinked and gloated and the great hands held the pitchfork out so that the rat was dancing in the fire. The fur on its body caught fire and went up in a little puff of flame, and its flesh blackened and curled with a sound like frying meat. It screamed. I didn't know a rat could scream.

The farmer laughed again.

Then something hurtled across the room, half

knocking over the farmer, and snatched the pitchfork out of the flames.

It was Jake, driven desperate I know now by the sight of my agonized face.

"Don't!" he cried fiercely, his face lit by the revolt of a gentle thing goaded beyond endurance. "Don't do that again. Not now anyway. Don't you see how you are hurting the little girl!"

The farmer had recovered himself. He snarled and made a lunge at Jake. But the boy was large for his age and had the pitchfork, the half-burned rat still squealing and writhing on its prongs. The farmer thought better of it and only stood glowering and muttering while Jake retreated out of the door with his horrible burden.

The farmer's slovenly wife came over to me and tried to comfort me, hiding my face in an apron that smelled of stale grease.

Mercifully, we left the farm in a different mood.

The sun was shining brightly, and the yellow buckboard with our spirited horses, restless from

the long wait, stood ready. The farmer and his wife waved us an obsequious good-by, and shouted last directions about crossing the ford farther up stream.

Jake was nowhere to be seen. But he had told me that he would be waiting at the turn of the road and presently, as we rounded the curve of a thicket of bushes, we saw him standing in the dust. He waved at me and his gray eyes smiled with an unconquerable courage.

I had told father about the shoes, and he reined in the horses and solemnly handed Jake out a whole round dollar.

"This is not for shoes," he said.

The look that leaped into Jake's eyes did much to console me afterwards. I knew what his mother meant to him.

The last I saw of him he had flung his hat into the air and was frantically turning a cart-wheel in boyish glee. Youth is easily beguiled.

This was my first glimpse through the picket fence into Jake's kingdom.

BOOK THE SECOND

HIGH WINDS

CHAPTER III

WHEN I was fifteen we left my village. My father had been restless for some years. Nauvoo wasn't big enough for his energies even with the outside interests he had made for himself. He felt, too, that it was not good for him to be the big man of so small a place. It hurt his growth. He said once that the people were so deferential to him, so anxious to please him, that he felt sometimes as though they had poured treacle over him, and he was sticky with it. He was a man of perceptions, my father.

Then, too, I was growing up. Presently I would be a young lady and Nauvoo was no place for me. I was an only child and neither my father nor my mother could quite make up their minds to let me go away to college for four whole years. So they fitted one thing and another together and decided to move to the city where father would have more scope, and where

I could go to the university as a day scholar and still live at home. For this, too, I am thankful.

It was May when we left home, May 3rd, I remember.

I was very much torn about going. In the main I wanted to go, I think. There was a sense of adventure about it, of life opening up before me, of vistas, possibilities. . . . Youth knows no limits and time had not yet closed about me. Yet Nauvoo was home and just at the last the call of familiar things was strong in me.

There was, too, a certain boy, Frank was his name. He had a great shock of red hair and the disposition of a student. The other girls laughed at him for a bookworm, but I—well, I didn't laugh. He loved history and already he was writing a history of the United States because he couldn't find one to satisfy him. I hated history myself, but I thought it a fine, brave thing to do. I lost him long ago, so I've no idea what became of him or his book, though in a certain desultory way I've watched for his name among the historians. Now that I con-

sider the matter I imagine that he is professor of history in some small college somewhere. Well, I wish him luck—though the thought of him made the leaving harder.

We were going down river first, to one of the big river towns, to visit relatives of my mother before going east to the city. I was glad of this, for I loved the river almost more than my village and in this way I need not say good-by to them both at once.

The spring was late that year and river traffic didn't begin regularly till the end of April. It was queer, uncertain weather, and just as the dumpy little stern-wheeler that was to carry us away rounded the curve into Nauvoo a wild flurry of rain came down. Half the village had come down to see us off and I have to laugh yet at the thought of the scurry for shelter that ensued. Only old Madame Martin, who looked like a witch, and my friend the captain of the ferry boat didn't seem to mind it, and stayed with us till the last minute. I was introduced with great solemnity to the captain of the river boat, and was much impressed by the ceremony.

When we chugged off shore and rounded the lower curve the rain had already stopped, but my eyes were too full of tears to take the last look I had hoped for. From the river my village is quite impressive. One sees the frame of the days of greatness, and the empty spaces between go unnoticed. There is a town on the Yangtze that sprawls just so and is just such an empty shell. Nanking, it is. I felt curiously at home there.

But I was fifteen and the world was before me. My tears dried almost as quickly as the rain flurry.

The river was full and running swiftly, so we made good time downstream. The current had cut off little islands covered with trees that flitted past silently, like patient voyagers going nowhere, each day being eaten away by the hungry waters. The scent of the willow and the dogwood on the higher slopes came down to us after the rain with a haunting sweetness, and I felt under the little tub the lap and strain of the river, strong and careless and eternal. The sense of adventure deepened to a flood and drove me up on the uppermost deck

below the little wheelhouse where I could feel the wind swirling about my skirts and watch the shifting effects of light that drifted over the water with the changing weather.

I remember shouting suddenly and waving my arms for the sheer exultation of the wind and the moment—and then coming suddenly to myself with a start and seeing the captain peering at me from the wheelhouse. But I dare say he understood. He loved the river, too.

Presently the boat stopped at a little village and I went down to the next deck to watch the men unloading the freight.

It was quite a performance. A narrow gangplank was run out and perhaps a dozen men, ill-clad men, derelicts for the most part, two or three of them negroes, began to unload. They had low wheelbarrows like baggage trucks and they came suddenly, with a rush, for they were going up an incline, past and a little below where I stood. They came from somewhere below in the boat, half ran up the gangplank with their heavy loads, disappeared into the freight house, and then reappeared with an air of the most complete leisure and casualness, to saunter

below again. The loads they carried were of all sorts; small very heavy boxes and big light ones, lengths of stovepipe, sawed timber, crates of food, bags of flour, pieces of furniture. It amused me to watch them, and there was nothing else to do.

After a little I began to distinguish the men as they came by me time after time. They were an odd assortment, but all but one of them seemed to belong to the job.

The exception was a lanky boy, about nineteen he must have been, strikingly homely, with a big, loose-hung mouth and friendly gray eyes. He was dressed in hickory trousers and a flannel shirt and, for all his outward similarity to the other men he seemed different, more alive, more sensitive—different.

I watched him for a long time as he came past, at that village and later when we stopped at other places. He didn't act like the other men either. He was in a better humor, more interested in his surroundings, and he was—well, not exactly malingering, but saving himself. I took to counting the loads. When the other men had carried five loads he was begin-

ning his fourth and when they had taken seven he had carried five. They weren't quite full loads either. He would appear with a single length of stovepipe or a chair while the other men wheeled sacks of flour or hustled boxes. Once he came out with two empty water buckets and spent nearly a whole stop waiting while a thin trickle of water filled them before he carried them back.

But the other men didn't seem to mind. He would grin engagingly at them as they passed and make a careless joke, or he would stop to give them a hand over the top of the incline. He saw me standing up on the deck and grinned at me, too.

Slowly it came over me that I had seen him before, and the impression deepened with time. But I couldn't place him at all, though I got interested and tried hard. I even went up and asked the captain about him.

"Yes, he's different," explained that worthy. "Better educated than the others I'd say. They call him 'Doc' and they like him fine. He's handy about the boat, too, helps the cook and

does little things. He's been with us quite a while, must be ten days, I guess."

Still I wondered where I had seen him. About dusk it came to me.

At one of the towns a dog came down with the other village loafers to watch the boat come in. He was a nosey pup and he kept running about among the men and getting between their feet. My boy had just set down a load and was pausing at the gangway to let a man with a loaded truck pass him when the pup came straggling along and got in the way of the man with the load. The man kicked out suddenly as he passed and caught the pup in the belly. The poor creature let out a yelp of pain and slunk away.

My boy winced a little, with hurt, gray eyes in a dull face.

I knew then. The stench of the hog pen came back to me, and the feeling of pain, and the boy with the dead voice talking and talking. I ran and told mother and asked to speak to him. We explained matters to the captain and got permission to have him come up. He

remembered us at once, and we sat and chatted till the next stop.

Things were going better with him, he said. He and his mother were living in St. Louis and he had a job in a printing house. This was vacation, two weeks of it. He had given his salary to his mother to live on and he was traveling about this way, "seeing a bit of the river," and being out of doors. He needed a change, he said. Working in a printing house was confining work. He went to night school, too, and was learning a few things. Altogether life was much pleasanter than when we saw him last.

He thanked my father again for the dollar, with a reminiscent smile on his face. I asked him what he had spent it on and he hesitated a bit. Then he smiled again and answered:

"Oh, something useless. It had to be useless, you see. A bottle of perfume for mother."

So I saw Jake the second time.

CHAPTER IV

IT has seemed to me sometimes a curious thing that the one time tragedy stalked across my own life, when fate struck out with the inevitability and the bland indifference of the forces of nature and the blow fell on us, I should not have found Jake beside me. It would have been so fitting. It would have rounded out the cycle, and given an almost Greek sense of unity to the working out of that sense of tightening doom I always felt about Jake.

But it did not happen so. Jake was not beside me. And only years later did I find that he had been in the outer orbit of the event, looking on from a great distance, not daring to come near. Yet that perhaps is also fitting. One can look through a picket fence either way.

It happened when I was nineteen, four years after we had left Nauvoo.

My father had done well in the city. He had

left the presidency of his bank in the village to become cashier in one of the large national banks in the city, and here, too, he had made good. In four years he had risen to be vice-president, and as the president was neither young nor well, he was often the practical head of the bank.

He was universally liked and respected. Even to this day people, strangers to me, when they find that I am his daughter, go out of their way to tell me kind things about him.

He had, too, a deep vein of domesticity, was fond of his house, his horses, and the squirrels he had enticed to live in the trees about the house by keeping little pans tied about the tree trunks, comfortably filled with nuts. To mother and me he was as devoted as the good father in the fairy story. Indeed, there are times when I think of him as the type of father, almost more than as an individual. I know now that when he died I had not yet quite grown out of the stage where the relationship swallows outside judgment. I developed late.

We lived in a big, rather beautiful house in a suburb on the North Shore. Mother had

made many friends and I was attending the university there, and busy with the enthusiastic busy-ness of my salad days. They were happy years.

It was on a holiday that it happened.

Mother and I had decided to stay in town the summer I was nineteen, for it was an era of business depression, and father did not feel that he could leave, as he sometimes could, for the north woods, where we had a summer cottage. So when the Fourth of July came around and a number of our friends proposed that instead of each shooting off a few fireworks at home as we had done before, we should pool the expenses and have a really good display on the lake front, mother and I joined enthusiastically in the arrangement. We thought it would be a pleasant distraction for father. What blind puppets the gods must think us!

The evening of the Fourth proved to be clear and pleasantly cool, with a light lake breeze and a placid tapestry of stars. Mother and I went, with the wives and daughters of several members of the pool, to the summer-house on

the Samuel Orr place, where we could get a good view of the festivities.

Our men folk had all gone off to help shoot the fireworks, father among them, looking very big and comfortable in his white flannels. I remember he tweaked my cheek, in a way he had, before he left and told me laughingly to be a good girl till he came back. Well—I have tried to be, though God knows the time is long.

It was very pleasant in the summer-house. The lake sighed and rustled almost at our feet, the Great Bear and the Northern Cross gleamed overhead, and the light dresses of the women fluttered in the breeze. About a quarter of a mile away the pier from which the fireworks were to be set off, jutted into the water, outlined in moving lights as the preparations went forward. Between it and us the curved shoreline was strung with points of orange light. Some one was singing from a canoe on the lake and the sound rang gratefully across the water. It was all very suburban and very gracious.

Presently the performance began with a great glow of red light and a blare of rockets. Then it settled down to single pieces that were fired

one by one and lived their tiny flashing instant against the night.

When three or four only had been shot off it seemed to us in the summer-house that the men had started a gigantic piece of some sort new to us. It started with something not unlike an irregular Catherine wheel that flashed and scintillated. Then a green light joined in, and before long the whole pier was in a blaze of fireworks, fireworks gone mad, fireworks in an ecstasy of self-destruction. They leaped and flamed and sparkled. Flower pots bloomed madly against the sky. Red, white and green lights glowed in clusters like some strange fruit. Roman candles spat and spluttered. Once a great Catherine wheel leaped, apparently of its own volition, off the pier and whizzed, whirling madly, far out over the dark water before it fell hissing to extinction.

And the rockets! There seemed to be rockets everywhere. Why did they ever buy so many rockets? They leaped and flashed continually, in every direction, straight out over the water in long horizontal lines of sparks, in towards the shore, outward and downward—but never

upward. They were mad, the rockets, quite mad.

We were sure by this time that something had gone wrong, and when in a few moments it was all over but a glow of red light that looked sullen and, in some new way, alarming, and we saw that the pier itself was burning, a feeling of apprehension came over us. The women fluttered and buzzed and a number of them rose uneasily and said they would walk over and see what had happened.

Just at the gate a young man met us, limping. It was the brother of one of my friends and he had come to tell us not to be alarmed. Something had exploded and hurt his foot, and one or two men had been slightly singed. But he didn't think any one had been badly hurt, though he had come away during the confusion.

It had been partly carelessness on the part of the men and partly an imp of a small boy. The men had spread the fireworks on the pier and covered them with tarpaulin to protect them from flying sparks. It was not really protection enough, but it would probably have done had not a boy got past the man stationed

to keep them off the pier. The youngster, who was quite small, thought to add to the general gaiety by setting off a "nigger-chaser" on his own account. With devilish surety it had whizzed under the tarpaulin, and before they could stop it the mischief was done.

The young man didn't think we needed to go. Any further news there was would be brought to us. Also, the show being over, the Orrs were serving refreshments. So the other women turned back.

But mother was too restless to be put off so easily. She wanted to see for herself, and I of course went with her. The shore road hadn't been cut through in those days and we turned inward and went along an avenue lined with great shade trees and flanked by houses set far back in spacious gardens.

There were few street lights and they threw long still shadows of tree trunks, and wavering shadows of leaves on my mother's light dress. Her face was very pale, even in that light, and she walked ever faster and faster, in a growing apprehension that was contagious. I began to be frightened too, though I assured her breath-

lessly that there was nothing to fear. She only answered:

"I'm afraid; I'm afraid. Hurry!"

We were almost running when we turned the corner that led down to the pier and came upon the fringes of the confusion. And there under the street lamp we met an old friend of my father's. His face in the light was drawn and stricken even before he saw us. When he did, he stopped short and visibly gathered himself together.

"Mrs. Drummond," he said without preamble, without palliation of any sort, "William is dead. He has a rocket through his heart."

So, inevitably and with bland indifference, fate struck, and the blow fell on us.

CHAPTER V

WRITING so about my own father has brought to my mind that I know nothing of Jake's father, not even his full name. I have gone back in my mind, stirring as one stirs under the dust of an old attic into which the sun filters mistily—a warm attic, full of musty odors that wake half-memories of childhood and trouble sleeping dreams. I have found many things—friends I had once and have long since lost, hopes I hid away till a brighter time for their fulfillment and, having hidden, forgot, little discarded selves of my youth, as frail and transparent as last year's locust skins. But of Jake's father I have found nothing.

I only know that his last name was Gilroy, that he fathered two children, Jake and his sister Margaret, and that he died when they were very young. I do not know his business, in what city he lived, or to what class he be-

longed, and I can only guess at the heritage he left his children.

Yet it has interested me to speculate about him.

Was it from him that Jake got the essential weakness that was an integral part of him, that dogged him, that undid him at the last? It was a weakness both physical and moral, the two inextricably bound up together, differing manifestations of the same thing. He could not hold his own against the tide of life. He tried, God knows he tried, with a body which was never more than fifty per cent of what a body should be, and a straw for a will, to hold his own. But he failed; was swept down stream and under, drowned at last.

Yet the other outstanding characteristic about Jake, his lovableness, his humorous sympathy, came, I think, largely from this essential weakness. He had the appeal that all weak courageous things have, stray mongrel dogs, the heart-breaking children of the slums. In women he appealed always to the mother, the strongest hold there is. For the cave-man calls with purple violence to the mate in woman, but

his lure is short, as short as the lure of beauty in woman is to men. The appeal to the mother in woman lasts beyond the grave.

Yet Jake never consciously played for this, never whined. So long as he kept himself together he always smiled, twisted a jest out of his misfortunes and said if pressed that he "would come out all right. It would all be the same in a hundred years, anyway."

He was very conscious of his weakness, and very pitiful towards all other weak things. He loved babies and small animals, sided automatically with the under dog and always had a good word to say for the harassed. Once I remember in Jake's presence blaming a mutual friend for letting himself be imposed upon.

"I don't know, Ruth," Jake cut in. "He never had a chance. His will was broken when he was a child. You can't expect too much of him now." Like Shelley in "Adonais," he spoke for himself.

This weakness Jake must have got from his father. Certainly his mother was not weak, either in body or in mind. She had, on the contrary, the strongest will I have ever seen in any

one, a will that took delight in exercising itself for its own sake, a will quite out of proportion to her other qualities or to anything she ever accomplished. She might have served as an advertisement for some of the modern systems of developing will-power. She might have produced the stigmata on her hands.

I have made for myself a picture of Jake's father and their family life. His wife married Gilroy, of course, just as Carla married Jake. And after they were married life did not run too smoothly. Gilroy, whatever his business, was never a financial success. I am sure of this, for his income could never have been more than sufficient for their needs and stopped entirely with his death. And life at home must have been trying.

I can see Gilroy, better looking than Jake, stronger too in many ways, but not strong enough. He would have taken to staying away from home to avoid trouble, being a "good fellow," living a little faster than was good for him—and being mercifully taken off by a fever or an accident while he was still young. A likable man too in his way, but lacking

Jake's supreme appeal, and lacking too Jake's courage in adversity. For Jake never took the easy way out, never side-stepped, went to the hurdle every time, though he knew he could not take it.

That must have been the general plan of Jake's father. But I have tried to reconstruct him further, to find something of his personality. Without much success, I fear. I've been looking at my own children and wondering, if I did not know my own Charley, whether I could reconstruct him from the children.

Yesterday, for instance, the children and I went for a long ramble on our dunes. It was a glorious day, with a high wind blowing off the lake, driving miniature gray mountains before it that tipped into white spray. The air was like a pale amber wine that mounted to the head and set the feet dancing. The children scrambled monkey-like up the side of a high dune and stood a-top it, bathing themselves in the sky. I came after them and found Betty standing apart from the boys, drinking great draughts of wind.

She looked up at me in her quick way and said:

"Mother, the wind has put a dry finger down my throat."

It was Charley exactly, the quick look, like a deep blue bird that darts at you and is gone, and the quaint, vivid phrasing.

And this morning Charley Junior, clogging with his mischievous feet and grinning so irrepressibly that I couldn't be angry with him for kicking the water pail over the drenched kitten. He just rode over me with laughter and flattened out my annoyance like a crushed puff ball. Then he took up the shivering beast and dried it with the clean shirt I had laid out for him to put on! And after that he warmed some milk for it as carefully as any mother could. It was Charley again, and I was left with the same sense of helpless adoration that contains a small part of annoyance, a great part of amusement, and the grateful knowledge that, like his father, he will never grow up.

From these things and a dozen like them I can reconstruct Charley almost completely, I who know him, I who love him. But if I did

not know him, perhaps if I did not love him, then I am afraid it could not be done.

In Jake's case, too, I have so little to go on. I never saw his sister Margaret, only a small faded photo of her long ago. She had a sensitive oval face, with dark hair brushed back from a high forehead. Mercifully for a woman she did not look like her brother. But she died before I came to know Jake well. So I cannot find their father in her. And Jake himself has been dead ten years. Much fades in ten years, many little gestures of hand and of mind.

Jake's own memories of his father, too, were of the vaguest. He must have died when the boy was very young indeed. But his mother—his mother filled all his young days as the sound of an organ fills every crevice and corner of a church, as the beat of the waves fills our days here on the dunes. It was of her he dreamed, for her he worked. She demanded, and received, a devotion as unending as the days of youth, and quite unmerited by her virtues.

For she was not an admirable person. Indeed, I find it difficult to write with sympathy even of the hardships she endured with Jake,

for hardships there were. Perhaps I wrong her; perhaps she was not then the woman she was in her old age, when I knew her, and all that was bitter in her had come to the surface. She must at least have been pleasant to look at then, and rather charming. Even as an old woman she had charm when she chose to exert it.

She was very religious. Having a will of iron, she clutched the Lord as Jacob did the angel, in a strangle-hold, and refused to let him go. Whether He ever blessed her I did not know. Certainly He never gave her the comfort of either a patient or a contrite heart.

Poor Jake's ill-assorted name, Jacob Abraham Gilroy, was a result of this determination on his mother's part. The Hebrew ancestry was entirely spiritual. His blood was pure Anglo-Saxon.

I have said that some of the gaps in my knowledge of Jake's life have been bridged slenderly by words, so that I know something of what passed in them. And these words came of course from some one, from Jake himself, from Charley, from Mrs. Gilroy or from Carla.

So that these bits are all colored by the feelings of the person who spoke them. And thus the bits do not all fit together, are not in key.

Charley, for instance, from whom much of my information came, though he is usually the most generous and kind thinking of men, has always had towards Mrs. Gilroy a dull resentment like nothing I have known in him elsewhere. If Charley—bless his child-like heart! —could hate any one, he hated Mrs. Gilroy. He could hardly be civil to her. Jake roused in him much the same protective spirit he roused in me and he saw in Mrs. Gilroy Jake's evil genius. He thought her religion a sham, her high-sounding words a deep-dyed hypocrisy.

I am not so sure about the latter. People are so curiously constructed in water-tight compartments, and religion has so little to do with life! It may be an escape from life, none the less sincere for being a thing apart. When it comes to Mrs. Gilroy's ethics I am inclined to agree with Charley.

One thing in favor of Charley's hypothesis concerning her religion is the sudden change from the pronounced Protestantism which

named Jake after the prophets, to an equally devout Roman Catholicism soon after Gilroy's death. It may have been a genuine change of heart, or it may have been due to the fact, as Charley insists, that the Roman Catholic orphan asylums in the town where Mrs. Gilroy found herself were more anxious to receive waifs than the Protestant. At all events, the fact remains that she put both her children in institutions at once, Margaret in an orphan asylum, and Jake, I believe, in another before the farm episode, though I am not absolutely sure of the latter.

She herself maintained her status as a lady, fallen upon evil days to be sure, but still a lady. She lived, heaven knows where or how, on the remnants of Gilroy's wage and the small life-insurance. One can see her, slight and rather charming, living in a cheap rooming house somewhere, cooking her meals over a gas burner, her clothes "shabby but genteel." She would be always a little wistful, as became a lady under such circumstances, would speak appealingly to strangers about her "great sorrow." She went to mass regularly of course and once

a week to the asylums where her poor dear children were kept.

I belong to a generation to whom such a thing is anathema. It is incredible to me that sane people could ever have seen in such a mode of life under the circumstances anything but a cheap and cowardly act, a deliberate shirking of responsibility. No wonder she grew bitter on such mental fare! But in justice to Mrs. Gilroy I must tell myself that she was not of my generation, that this happened long ago, before woman's social sense had wakened.

Such a life must have been difficult enough in all conscience! But Mrs. Gilroy stuck it out and kept her "dignity" intact, whatever that cryptic virtue may be. She remained a lady, and died a lady. Well, peace be to her ashes, now that her seed has died out and there is no longer any one to suffer the consequences.

Of the period when the last frayed end of her money was gone, and Jake, a boy of fourteen, became her sole support, I know little, and you can guess as much as I. Jake did a little of everything. Once I know he had a job hand-painting flowers on porcelain bathtubs!

Once, it must have been near the beginning, he sold papers. When I met him on the Mississippi he was working in a printing house. The newspaper game seems to have been always somewhere in the offing with him.

His schooling was rudimentary, but Mrs. Gilroy had this virtue of a lady, that she spoke correct English and had a smattering of the classics which she passed on to Jake. And he read a good deal in odd moments. So that he did not give the impression of being uneducated.

He made, I know, desperate attempts to get some sort of schooling in art, for the desire to be a painter burned in him from his birth. He went to Saturday afternoon sketch classes at the art school of the town, and studied nights. He had talent, as I have said.

Of the period between the time Jake was nineteen and vacationing on a river boat till he was twenty-seven and on the art staff of a newspaper in the city I know only one thing.

It is his marriage with the daughter of a farmer in Missouri. When I first heard of it from Carla, after I had already known them

for some years, I confess I was astonished. But now that I think the matter over I perceive that something of the sort was almost inevitable. Jake was so sympathetic and so weak. It would hardly have been possible for him to escape some such entanglement. He was, it seems, taken ill somewhere in the country, though where it was or what he was doing there I cannot imagine. Perhaps he was taking another vacation. He must have been about twenty at the time. At all events this farmer's daughter nursed him and he seems to have married her out of gratitude. Or perhaps because she was with child.

The only thing I positively know about her is the strictly feminine detail that the child she bore Jake weighed thirteen pounds! Poor woman, in this at least I feel for her! I'm wondering now whether this child is still living. I hardly think it is. Jake, I know, never mentioned either it or its mother to me, and I am reasonably sure he never sent it money, which he would surely have tried at least to do had it lived.

The marriage didn't last long. The woman

was "quite impossible" and Jake's mother disposed of her in some way, via the law courts, I suppose. It was a chapter to be kept discreetly under cover.

There were also whispers of a love affair with a widow. This information came from Charley and is sketchy in the extreme. I gathered that Jake would have married her but that the lady would have none of him permanently. She finally married, I believe, an elevator boy, and perhaps has lived happily ever since.

I am setting down, as I promised, all I know about Jake, changing nothing. These rather unpleasant details seem to me a necessary part of the picture. Jake was a weak man, and lovable. He had the vicissitudes of his kind.

Yet, though Jake fell in love and out again and went more or less aimlessly from one job to another, from one hope to another, there was at bottom only one *leit motif* in his early life, and this was the love of his mother. She was with him always, clinging to him, praising him, encouraging him. She extracted him from the pitfalls into which his own casualness and weakness led him. The necessity for support-

ing her gave an object to existence, and the blind devotion which she demanded was pleasant and filial to give. Until, at twenty-five, Jake married Carla, his mother had had no serious rival in his affections, and she rode securely in the saddle, slight and rather charming, guiding him by the merest pressure of the knees, so well had she broken him, still very wistful and ladylike, still speaking appealingly to strangers about her "great sorrow" and the dear son who was her only comfort.

Then Carla came. . . .

CHAPTER VI

COME now to the link that held my life for so long close to Jake's. I come now to Charley.

But how in the world am I to set him down? How can I set down the element in which I live and the air I breathe? Charley is in every fiber of my being, in the warp and woof of me. He's a husband and a lover and a pal and a habit. Whenever I contemplate Charley, which I do occasionally, something far down deep in me rises up suddenly, with a quick little rush like a fish striking, to meet the thought of him. It's half a sort of exultation and it's half sheer amusement. This is not, of course, according to the rules. A completely happy wife ought not to contemplate her husband with exultant amusement. Nevertheless I do.

Surely there is not, nor ever has been, a person just like Charley, a person so irresistibly gay, so impish, so harum-scarum, and yet so pro-

foundly orderly and reliable. Does any one else in the world at the age of forty-two wake in the morning like a robin, with a ridiculous song on his lips and feet that break into a clog on the mere excuse that the sun is shining? Does any grown man slide down the banisters to breakfast, greet his children with a solemn imitation of the best flourish of Benvenuto Cellini, and romp off to his work like a puppy to play? Does any head of a successful boy's school consistently, during nineteen years of married life, play practical jokes on a long-suffering wife, and being scolded for it, pull a long face of mock repentance, in which are set two twinkling eyes, and hold out his ear to be boxed?

And, when evening comes and the children have been bundled off to bed, is any author, over his latest treatise on biology, seized about nine-thirty with the irresistible sleepiness of youth, so that he sits with two forefingers propping up his eyelids, and finally goes off to bed with the dragging feet of a sleepy child? No, they broke the mold after they made Charley.

Breakfast at our house is a never-failing

source of joy to me. Charley and the children are better than any four-ring circus ever invented. They spar and whoop and giggle, and carry on endless farces of their own invention. Sometimes these farces are sheer nonsense, in which chargers of milk glasses and chariots of egg cups are drawn up in battle array, marched solemnly about the table in columns of four to the accompaniment of the most snappy military-sounding orders from Charley, and finally sent against a rival army of toast and salt cellars. And sometimes—more often of late years since the children are older—they are farces of the wit, gay bits of raillery that keep us so long at table that I have to wake the family early to leave time for them. The boys are just like their father in this, and it's one of those unworded conventions by which family life lives, that, no matter how hard a day's work may be before us, we take our full time of nonsense before we face it. Many a time breakfast has helped me over a day that would have been hard to endure without it.

In spite of the years behind us I am still astonished at this perpetual gaiety of Charley's.

And once or twice lately I have surprised in Betty's eyes—Betty is like me—the same look of speculative amusement I know my own must wear. Betty is eleven and the baby, and she adores her father with a blind devotion very satisfactory to my maternal heart. Also she trusts him absolutely.

About a month ago when Charley was with us on the dunes for the week-end—he has a summer term this year—and we were all swimming in the lake horizoned like a sea, Betty got beyond her depth and began to sink. She could swim a little, but she swallowed some water and grew frightened. I shall always see in my nightmares the little brown oval of her face just above the water, the dark circles of her eyes filled with an agony of terror, and the slim rounded arms that batted like blind things. She made a horrible gulping noise and turned her face of terror towards her father.

Charley shot through the water towards her before I could do more than realize what was happening. But it was characteristic of him that he did not touch her. Instead I heard his

voice, full and confident, ringing out over the water.

"Steady, little soldier, steady!" he said. And then in a tone of perfect authority, "Carry on!"

And Betty carried on. The terror left her eyes, her slim arms stopped batting and took up again the rhythmic stroke, and she came in quite unaided and a trifle ashamed. From that moment her fear of the water left her absolutely, and now she is a regular little porpoise. She throws herself face downward in the waves, her brown hair spreading like a fan behind her, her brown arms shooting upward and outward in the crawl stroke like slim flails through the spray, and her brown body slipping like thought between the parted waves. Then she comes up laughing, throws back her hair with the gesture of a blithe mermaid, winks the water out of her eyes, and turns, still laughing, to begin again.

She trusts her father as I trust him, but I can see in her eyes lately that she is going to feel towards him exactly the amusement that has never failed in me. Charley may not be the

greatest man in the world, but surely he is the dearest, and the most satisfactory to live with!

It's odd that when I first met him I did not realize this quality in him. I thought him a very studious, clever young man who took all the honors in biology class at the University and beat us all at laboratory work. But then, I was a very studious young person myself in those days, and doubtless I saw only what I understood. And that, as I look back upon it now, must have been very little indeed.

I must have been a rather dreadful person. I took life with such immense seriousness, believed in Efficiency and the power of the Higher Education to an altogether disproportionate degree, felt that the world needed guidance badly and that I was the one to guide it. I considered being a non-sectarian missionary to the poor women in China or India who did not realize Woman's true position. I was strong for suffrage, and quite, quite humorless.

Well, the gods were kind to me and sent me Charley.

It came about in this way.

After my graduation mother proposed that

we go to Europe for the summer and acquire a little more background before I set out on my mission of reform. Mother is wise in her quiet way and I can see now what she meant to accomplish by it.

We did much the usual thing, London, the English lakes, Brussels, Paris, each just enough to be a good deal interested, very much confused and decidedly upset as to digestion. Then we went on to Switzerland.

I have discovered this about myself, that I am a hill person. People, those who have eyes to see at all and don't merely live in a landscape as a moth lives in a blanket, divide themselves into three classes: hill people, plains people and sea people. They only come to full power and perception in the surroundings in which they belong, just as plants thrive better in one soil or another. I'm a hill person, though I was born on the plains, and I found myself in Switzerland.

At the first sight and feel of the mountains something in me arose and exulted, something that has never quite died since, that thirsts out of the city towards the mountains with a ter-

rible thirst. It is this that has drawn me to the dunes, which are not mountains, yet are cousin to them.

In Switzerland I found myself, and in Switzerland I found Charley. It is so often so, that one must go to the ends of the world to find one's next door neighbor.

We had gone on, still by the usual route, to the Simplon Pass and the gorge of the Aar River. It was afternoon when we entered the gorge.

The river—there are always rivers in my life—has cut for itself a deep, an incredibly deep and narrow gorge through the solid rock. At the bottom it tumbles and rushes, foaming and turning back on itself. The sound of its rushing fills the narrow gorge like a palpable presence. It beats in one as the blood beats. It overpowers one, it all but drowns one.

The Swiss have built along the gorge, half way up its side, a narrow plank walk that clings flylike to the rock and hangs over the beating flood. This walk was deserted when mother and I found it. Always, at every crisis, the gods are good to me.

Mother grew restive soon under the cataract of sound. She fidgeted and finally went back to the open air, leaving me alone.

But to me the place was exhilarating as no place had ever been. The wild beauty of the gorge, with the long slender sunbeams that stabbed into it, touching the rocks with light and gilding the leaping spray, and the beat of the rushing water spoke to me in a language deeper than all speech, deeper even than thought, a language that went to the very root of my being. It seemed to me that some wall in me was broken down, and that beauty was rushing in on me in a stream that filled me utterly and then continued to flow till I could hardly bear it. My body grew dizzy under the strain and I clutched at the rail for support.

Then one of those ridiculous accidents happened by which the gods keep us sane. I wore on my wrist, largely because mother liked to see me in feminine bangles, a hollow silver hoop bracelet, a Nethersole bracelet I remember it was called, which was fashionable then. As I clutched at the rail I caught the thing in some way and it slipped over my hand and fell,

bounding and flashing like a silver fish, into the river. Even above the beat of the water I could hear the sharp "ping, ping" it made as it struck the rocks and rebounded.

As I watched it, quite brought to earth again and rather regretful, a voice spoke suddenly in my ear.

"It sounds like ice in a water pitcher," it shouted pleasantly.

Completely surprised, I turned and looked into the twinkling eyes of the studious young man who took all the honors in biology at home.

I might have been irritated. I might have thought it a totally inadequate remark in so heavenly a spot. But for some reason I didn't. I was hardly even surprised to find him here. I grinned in response, shrugged the bracelet out of my consciousness and went back to the contemplation of the gorge.

Only this time it was different. Charley stood beside me, elbow to elbow and looked too. And there seemed no need of words.

When finally we went out and found mother we were already fast friends. Charley attached himself to our party and drove with us for two

days over the passes and through the unspeakable glory of the Alps. Then he turned another way and we went on with our journey.

Only, from that moment I date the decline of my mission to the poor women of China who do not know Woman's true position. I put off the date of my departure to some indefinite future time, much to mother's delight, and when we got home again Charley and I spent more and more of our time together until, quite naturally and without any question on my part, we got married so we could be together always. Higher education, efficiency and similar gods disappeared from my heaven as simply as one picture is washed from a slate to make room for another. I fear I was not of the elect!

When Charley came to introduce me to his best friend he proved to be a homely likeable fellow with a loose-hung mouth and deep gray eyes, a fellow whose name was Jake.

CHAPTER VII

OF all the innumerable mysteries with which man is surrounded on this burning bubble of a world—the mystery of the orderliness of the stars, the incredible, untidy beauty of trees, the winged dust that takes to itself new forms and life-cycles, yet returns ever to itself, the unconquerable spirit, born of this dust, that yet reaches beyond the stars—of all these none is more strange to me than the mystery of human relationships.

Out of all the millions of human beings who come together, for an hour or a lifetime, have any two relationships ever been exactly alike? I have never felt exactly the same even towards two waiters in a restaurant or two clerks in a shop. I cannot touch, for so long as I touch elbows on a street car, the life of another human, and not have towards him some sort of feeling, dull or vivid, pleasant or unpleas-

ant, that I have never had before in just that way. Unceasingly life offers me a procession of tastes, of subtleties, of adjustments in relationships so inexhaustible as to outstrip my imagination completely. And I marvel.

Doubtless some day I shall grow stale. I shall begin to catalogue, to pigeon-hole experiences, to say "This John is like a Jim I once knew." Or "This friendship is like that other." I have watched other people doing this, have seen their minds setting like stale chemicals that are losing their power to react. But I, like Charley, am forty-two, and so far it has not yet happened to me.

Surely it must be a question of chemistry, this mystery of human relationships, some higher organic chemistry whose laws we do not know. Though I tell myself never so wisely afterwards that for this reason or for that I like or dislike some one, yet it is always very much after the fact, and I have an uneasy feeling about it that I am throwing dust in my own eyes. For I have liked a scalawag and despised a good man. And how can I explain that to

myself on any virtuous basis of reason? It is so, and there's an end of it, and a mystery.

The third time I saw Jake, under Charley's shadow, the relationship between us had changed completely. It had been vivid enough before, but in its essence casual, an accident of time and space. Now, in an instant, it was permanent and settled.

Charley brought him out to the north shore to see me one day not so very long after we got back from Europe and before we were married. "Gilroy of the *Inter-Ocean*," Charley called him, and added that he already knew me, had known me for years after a fashion, and wanted to renew old acquaintance. "Gilroy" meant nothing to me. I had never heard Jake called anything else but "the orphan boy," and even if I had known his name I doubt whether I should have connected it with this newspaper man from the city. And Charley was very mischievous about it and refused to divulge, if he knew, what had been our former acquaintance. So I was all agog with curiosity and put on my best bib and tucker, as my grandmother used to say, for the occasion.

Yet even so they took me unaware when they arrived. It was a warm Sunday afternoon in September and I had expected them to arrive sooner than they did. I got tired waiting for them at last and went off with a book to my father's den, which, since his death, had grown to be my favorite room. It was the conventional East Indian smoking-room, but it had been done by a good decorator and it wasn't bad, with its pillars, its hammered brasses, its heavy Turkish chandeliers and its Bagdad covered divans around the walls. I thought it at the time rather sumptuous. It takes half a lifetime to outgrow suburban taste.

I had not quite got over my childish pleasure in lying on my stomach, though it hardly seemed the thing to do for a young woman of my serious viewpoint on life. Still, I indulged myself sometimes when I thought no one would see me. So this day I stretched out on a divan, chin in elbows, my book spread out before me, and in two minutes had forgotten the mysterious Gilroy completely. I was, and still am, totally oblivious of the world when I am read-

ing. Anything may transpire, even dinner, and I will neither hear nor smell it!

Suddenly I grew aware of a masculine hand that thrust itself between me and the page and gesticulated mockingly. I looked up, covered with confusion, and saw Charley standing over me, and beside him, Jake. They were both grinning like the imps they were. I collected my scattered wits and scrambled up as best I might, ready to stand on my dignity. But it was no use. Dignity simply cannot survive Charley. And presently we were all laughing together.

From that instant I accepted Jake completely. He was Charley's friend and, miraculously, he was already mine. I had always known him. All the intermediate stages, the discoveries, the adjustments, were passed over in the instant he stood laughing down at me, and already he was half my brother. We grew closer with the years; the affection deepened, but it never again altered its essential quality. He was always my brother.

Jake lit a cigarette, dropped down on a divan and, with Charley as an amused listener, began

a highly colored account of our past acquaintance. He didn't mention the hogs or the incident of the rat, and he succeeded in making the rest very amusing. The farmer, he added, had since died of pellagra.

"So you see," he smiled, "like the muffins on the breakfast table, I seem bound to reappear in your life. We may as well make the best of it, and I intend to begin at once by calling you 'Ruth.' "

I nodded assent. Already I knew that it was only for Charley's benefit that he mentioned the matter at all. We understood many things without words, Jake and I.

I had been watching him as he talked. The eight years since I had seen him had of necessity altered him. He was more settled, both physically and mentally, more sure of himself. His body was still loose-hung, carelessly put together, one would have said, if he had been jointed by some human doll-maker. He never looked strong, nor was, and his lower lip was as lax as ever. But he looked at this time healthier than I ever saw him look. He was slightly heavier, his color better, his gray eyes

full of an amused speculation. His eye-brows, which were rather heavy, were very gray, though his hair was dark, and this in some unexplained way gave him a suggestion of stability which belied the mouth.

His manner had changed, too. Fortunately, he never acquired the professional newspaper man's hard-shell assurance, but in his boyhood he had been too unsure of himself, too apologetic, and the training in meeting all sorts of people had been good for him. The slight touch of humorous self-depreciation which remained was always one of his greatest charms.

He sat now, puffing leisurely at his cigarette in the warm September afternoon. Never, I think, was he more contented, more at peace with himself and the world. This was, now that I look back on it, the happiest period in Jake's life.

"But," said I, "speaking of names, how did you ever discover mine? 'Jake' was all I ever knew of you, and surely you cannot have remembered my last name, even if you ever heard it."

A change came over his face and his eyes

grew darker. He sat up straight on the divan.

"No," he said slowly. "No, I didn't know your name."

"Yet when I spoke of Ruth Drummond you said you knew her," put in Charley.

"I came to understand several years ago," Jake went on quietly, "and ever since then I've been wanting to come and see her—to tell her I was sorry. But somehow I never quite dared," and he looked up at me from under his gray eyebrows appealingly. "I see now I was wrong. I should have come."

I waited, wondering.

From a wallet in his coat pocket he produced a newspaper clipping and handed it to me with a half gesture of apology.

"Did you see this?" he asked.

It was a reproduction of a pen drawing, scrupulously, almost lovingly done, of a man lying on a bier. Beside his head were candles and his hands, long aristocratic hands, were crossed over his breast. The face was that of a man of middle age, a fine face, very quiet in death. It was my father's face.

In a flood the memories of that tragic time

came back to me. I had stood, I remembered, by a window through which streamed the hot July sun, holding this in my hand. My heart was dull and breathless, as is the way of grief, yet strangely liberated also, strangely purged of all the pettiness of the outsides of life. And in some way I seemed to be waiting, though I knew not for what.

I had looked at the drawing, which did not seem like a newspaper drawing, and wondered vaguely with a passing wonder that it should have been done in just this way. The other papers carried the usual photographs, with the usual eulogistic regrets for a prominent man dramatically brought to his death. I had even saved the clipping somewhere.

Jake had begun to speak, slowly, still half apologetically.

"It was the first thing I ever did for the paper," he said. "I had just come up to the city, just been given the chance to try for the job. It was very important to me that I make good.

" 'A prominent banker has been killed in a very curious way,' my editor said to me, 'and

I find we have no photo of him in the "morgue." Go out to the North Shore and get a sketch of him.'

"I thought first of getting a photo and making the sketch from that. The name 'Drummond' meant nothing to me. So I came first to the house. The lights were still lit, but it was late at night and I was very new to the newspaper game, and timid. I hated to intrude on a house of grief at that hour. But I knew nowhere else to get the photo. As I stood in the warm darkness on the suburban lawn, uncertain what to do, it suddenly occurred to me that very probably they had taken the body to an undertaking establishment and I could get the sketch there. So I went down to the pier where the accident had occurred, and which was still smoking. There I found a few curious people still hanging about and from them I learned the name of the undertaker."

Jake paused, and a sudden quizzical smile lit his face.

"Undertakers are queer folk," he said, "but on the whole I like them, in spite of their obsequiousness. They don't blink facts. They

and the doctors and the lawyers and the newspaper folk see many things that the rest of humanity chooses to ignore.

"This one was industrious, too, and already the body was prepared for burial. He agreed willingly to show it to me and took me down with him to a sort of cold storage plant where his guests were housed.

" 'He is here,' said the undertaker, and drew out a long shelf-like drawer, one of a number. But when I looked there lay the body of a young girl, hardly more than a child, very thin and pallid, with wisps of carroty hair, and brown freckles that showed dark on her wax-like face.

"The undertaker shoved back the drawer quite unperturbed.

" 'Oh, no,' he said casually, 'that's the wrong one,' and he drew out another. 'Here he is.' "

Jake paused, then went on steadily.

"Your father lay there, strong looking and beautiful."

He paused again a long while, and sat looking out the window where one of the squirrels father loved scampered on the branch of an old

oak, frisking a busy tail and scolding. At last he went on.

"I knew him at once, and I thought of him in the high buckboard with the blooded horses, leaning down to give a dollar to the orphan boy. A real sorrow came over me, almost as though I had lost one of my own family. So few people were good to me when I was a boy.

"I made the sketch with real emotion. You can see that in it, I think. And I drew him just as he lay, only that I put candles beside his head.

"When I took the sketch to my editor he looked startled.

" 'It's not what I expected,' he said. But when he had looked at it a moment he added, 'We'll run it anyway, for it's very well done and this is a curious case. But next time you must open the eyes and make the man as though he were living.' "

Jake's voice changed in quality, grew lighter, more colloquial.

"So I came to know your name," he said, "and so I got my job. I meant to come to see you, as I said, to tell you how sorry I was.

But one does not do all the things one means to do."

It was Charley who spoke next.

"It is strange," he said in a voice very moved for Charley, "how you and Ruth seem to find one another."

I cannot remember that I said anything.

The talk shifted then, and turned to casual things. We went out to the veranda and afterwards mother came down in a lavender gown and we had supper there under the vines.

I asked after Jake's mother and his face lighted up.

"She's as pretty as ever," he said. And then, "She's really a remarkable woman. You've never met her, have you? May I bring her out to see you? She's heard of you so often."

"Of course," I answered. "I should love to meet her."

So it was understood and the last thing Jake said as I waved good-by to them was:

"You shall see mother soon."

CHAPTER VIII

BUT, as I might have foreseen, Jake never got around to bringing his mother out to the North Shore. He did so few of the things he intended to do! His days, outside of work hours and the things he was compelled to do, were so taken up with things that presented themselves to him at the moment, sudden little whimsies and impulses, or the casual interference of any one who happened to be on hand, that he had no time to do what he planned. He would put off doing something he really cared about for so long that the impulse grew cold in him and took on the austere aspect of a duty—and being human he liked to avoid duties.

He gained something by this undoubtedly. Though he never steered his course in the main, but went where the winds blew him, yet he went with such a good grace! I never knew any one who enjoyed the moment as much as Jake

did, who could throw himself with such heart-felt verve into a tiny adventure, such as finding a blue heron track in the sands, or meeting a friend in an unexpected place. He would light up suddenly with an almost Latin gaiety, as though one had turned on the electric light. It made him an irresistible companion for an idle hour. His friendship for Charley had started three years before over just such a tiny adventure, a hazing escapade on the campus which he had been sent to sketch. Charley has the same quality of gaiety and the two of them had loved each other from the first; the friendship deepened with time.

He didn't bring his mother then—although Charley and I saw him occasionally—till the day of our wedding. It was hardly fair to me of course, for I was in no state to give her my undivided attention. Certainly my memory of the event is hazy enough, a confused jumble of a solemn clergyman mouthing words which had so little emotional effect on me, after the rehearsal and the rather elaborate preparations, that I remember considering the cut of his clerical collar during the ceremony to the exclu-

sion of all thought of the responsibilities of matrimony; of my mother weeping quietly and not unhappily; of a wedding veil that kept catching in everything; of ridiculous little white china doves perched on gilded hearts that were sticky with cake, of a great deal of unnecessary fuss and feathers, and finally of Charley, imp that he was, murmuring ridiculous gay nonsense into my ears and deliberately upsetting the gravity of the occasion.

But out of this jumble there emerges one clear picture of Jake's mother. It was after the ceremony and I was standing with Charley, being kissed by the assembled multitude. Jake brought Mrs. Gilroy up, and she took my hand and peered into my face with an intensity that had to me, even at the moment, something unpleasantly sentimental about it.

"May the Lord God and His holy angels keep you and guard you, you beautiful young thing!" she said.

It is difficult to answer a remark of that sort, but I murmured something.

My impression was of a small slender woman, with masses of beautiful white hair,

large sentimental brown eyes and a manner that would have been distinctly charming if it hadn't been so hot. I don't remember noticing her chin at all that first day, and the general impression she made on me was rather favorable, in spite of her sentimentality.

She coquetted openly with Jake. I remember her hanging to his arm and looking up at him adoringly when she said:

"Now that Charley is married I suppose Lover"—she always called him Lover—"will be marrying, too, and leaving his fond old mother."

She was not really old, in spite of her white hair, certainly not older than the latter fifties, but she always spoke of herself as an "old woman." Jake, I think, liked it. It gave him a chance to expostulate that she was the youngest mother he knew.

When she spoke of Jake's marrying, he didn't protest, as I half expected him to do. He looked down at her lovingly instead and answered:

"But if I should marry, Motherling, you

wouldn't lose me, and you would gain a daughter."

A sudden veil came over her brown eyes, and she moved a little uneasily. But she only answered:

"Of course. I should love a daughter."

After that my own affairs swallowed me. Charley and I got free of all the cluttering people at last and he took me in his arms and kissed me, so that a wonderful faintness came over me and the stars rushed together. . . .

We got back from our wedding trip three weeks later and went to housekeeping in an adorable little apartment in the city. Charley was teaching in a normal school and, before long, I was getting ready for Charley Junior.

Jake used to drop in often at first, and I took the greatest care to make him welcome and to cement his friendship with Charley. I have my own opinion of young wives who stifle and root out their husbands' friendships.

But after a month or two he came less and less often, and finally we didn't see him for several weeks. I asked myself whether I could have done anything to hurt him, but Charley

wasn't in the least disturbed and, when I spoke to him about it, he only waved his hand mysteriously and began to chant a little nursery rhyme of our youth:

> "A frog he would a wooing go,
> Heigh-oh, says Rowley,
> Whether his mother would let him or no,
> With a rolly polly gamin and spinach,
> Heigh-oh, says Anthony Rowley."

Not another word could I get out of him. Then one evening in the springtime Charley and I went for a walk in the park.

It was a glorious evening, warm and insinuating, with a little breeze that was heavy with the promise of all the beauty to come, the beauty that was already stirring and living in the brown earth—and in me. The trees with their tiny leaves were whispering together and the lake sighed and rustled mysteriously. The sap was rising in every smallest living thing, and in the warm darkness it seemed to me that the air was full of thousands and thousands of tiny wings, beating, beating. . . .

I had a feeling of the strangest communion with the spring. I was myself the spring. And I saw that the restlessness and the urge that

had always before shaken me when the earth began to wake was the restlessness of things incomplete. For now I was no longer incomplete. I was gloriously, incredibly complete. I was the earth, pregnant and stirring. I was life waking. I was the spring. . . .

Charley and I found a bench and pulled it into the shadow of some lilac bushes where we would not be seen. I sat with my head on his shoulder and his hand holding mine, and I was so happy that I was quite speechless, almost swooning with the completion of it.

The shadows of the little leaves in the moonlight quivered at our feet and a tree toad chirred in the darkness. The earth seemed to hold its breath.

Suddenly, with a sharp crackling of twigs, in a sort of blind hurry, two people burst through the lilac bushes and stood beside us, almost touching me. But they did not see us.

They were caught up in a great wind of spring, blind with the flame of it. They were locked fast in each other's arms and they stood, rooted like trees in the warm darkness, not moving, scarcely breathing, the man's lips

pressed to the woman's till her head was forced backward and her weight was almost supported in his arms. The flame that wrapped them came like a palpable thing to Charley and me.

At last, with a sudden gesture the man released her and cried out in a voice terrible with passion:

"Oh, my darling! My love! My darling! I love you! I want you! I want you so!"

He was like a man mad. He crushed her to him and released her. His hands, like separate beings, flew over her, pressed her and touched her everywhere at once, her cheeks, her throat, her breasts, her hips. His lips rained kisses, hard savage kisses, on her lips and throat. And between kisses he cried, over and over, in his choked voice:

"I want you! I want you so!"

Charley and I sat motionless, holding our breath. For in the instant he had released the girl we had both recognized Jake, Jake so gentle always and half apologetic, Jake!

In the first surprise of recognition I had stirred, but Charley's hand closed over mine in a viselike grip. And I knew that he was right.

I did not know the girl and in the dim light I could make out nothing more than that she was of medium size and dark, and that her silhouette was the silhouette of the fashion books.

But presently she spoke, between kisses, in a voice that was also strangely moved, saying a single word:

"Come."

And again, coaxingly, "Come!"

She put Jake's arm about her, and with her head against his shoulder they moved away through the trees, stopping now and then to stand again locked in each other's arms.

When they had gone without seeing us, Charley spoke.

"Jake must never know," he said.

And we, too, kissed in the wind of the spring.

BOOK THE THIRD

THE HEAT AND BURDEN OF THE DAY

CHAPTER IX

ONE day about three weeks later Jake dropped in to see us. He had come, he announced, to invite us to dinner at the little flat on the north side where he lived with his mother. It was just to be a family affair, he said, but some one would be there whom he wanted us to meet. He was amusingly reticent about it, grinned mysteriously and when Charley teased him, fled. We accepted with alacrity. The situation was only too apparent.

I wish I knew how to set down the peculiar quality of that dinner. So often I find myself curiously moved by situations whose currents and cross-currents never reach the surface at all, yet which are all the more poignant because they are suppressed. Life is full of them. There are times and places when the arteries that carry the life-blood of the spirit come so near the surface that one can see them beating

under the skin, can feel them stirring, live and warm, under one's hand. Yet nothing comes through, nothing is broken.

It was so with this dinner. The stuff of tragedy was there, already vibrating, beginning to ferment under the surface. I felt it; Charley felt it; Mrs. Gilroy, I know, felt it. Yet nothing happened, nothing at all. Outwardly it was a pleasant, smooth little dinner to introduce Jake's best friend to the girl he was to marry. But with us at the table the future sat, and his face was not good to look upon.

When Charley and I rang the bell of the little flat Jake opened the door for us himself. He was nervously cordial, bustled about while we took off our wraps, and ushered us a shade pompously into the little drawing-room.

I looked at him with a queer sense of unfamiliarity. He seemed now like a stranger. He wore a dinner coat, an event which occurred so rarely that he never felt like himself in it, nor looked it. But this was only an outward symbol of the curious constraint in the air.

The little room was stuffy and, to me, unpleasant. The woodwork and the furniture

were raw yellow oak, gleaming with varnish. There were heavy green curtains at the small windows, and a too-bright green table cover on a square table. A piano was crowded into the space between a door and a window, with a cheap Japanese vase on it and some sentimental songs of the old school, "Listen to the Mocking-bird," "The End of a Perfect Day," and "The Lost Chord." With them were a number of religious songs, and a brass crucifix on a black ground hung conspicuously on the wall, a rosary dangling from it. Several of Jake's drawings were framed on the walls.

A mixed odor of varnish, stuffed furniture and cooking was in the air. Jake made us sit down, but he was too nervous to sit himself, and he moved about aimlessly as he talked, cracking indifferent jokes with one eye on the door, and generally advertising his great surprise. Jake never learned to dissemble with any skill.

At last the door opened and Mrs. Gilroy and Carla came in together. A sudden feeling almost of panic, came over me. I could hardly bring myself to look closely at Carla, so sharp

was the silhouette in the park cut in my consciousness, so clearly did I hear Jake's terrible voice of passion and see his flying hands.

Jake sprang to his feet, obviously relieved, and his voice rang out in a sort of masculine triumph.

"Carla, this is Charley, and this is Ruth," he said, and then formally, "This is Miss Carla Swanson, my fiancée."

She came forward, smiling with a sort of bright assurance, and held out her hand. She was thirty at this time, and slender. Her face was a little too large and her upper teeth protruded slightly, but she was not unpleasing looking. Her hair and eyes were dark and her complexion excellent, with the look of a well-kept skin. She was dressed with great care and a certain "drive" that was characteristic of her. She always looked well kept.

Heaven knows I wish to be fair to Carla! She had—or has, for she is probably alive somewhere, though I lost track of her years ago—many excellent qualities. She was gay and intelligent in a certain light way, she was good company and a good cook, and she had at bot-

tom a streak of loyalty that amazed me occasionally in her.

Yet Carla and I were not sympathetic. I wish it had not been so, and that I could write differently of her. But when I think of Jake I know that nothing but complete honesty with myself will satisfy the spiritual need which has driven me to face the story of his life. It is not I who condemn Carla. It is the fruit of her own actions.

She was essentially undisciplined. And she was cheap—that is it—she was cheap. Everything about her was over-emphasized. Her manner was a little too assured, her clothes were a trifle too flashy, she assumed knowledge which she did not possess and a position which she did not have. Coming from St. Louis, she always spoke of herself as "southern," referred in passing to the "first families of the south" and affected when she remembered it, which was not always, certain southern mannerisms of speech, saying "raound" for "round" and "tennis-coat" for "tennis-court." She had a characteristically complacent little gesture of sitting down and smoothing out her silk skirts

as the conclusion of an unpleasant subject which was always irritating to me.

That first evening, as she came towards me with her air of bright assurance I wanted so passionately for Jake's sake to like her that I thought I did. I knew the instant I saw her that she was not a woman I should have chosen for a friend of my own volition. But circumstances had decreed that we were to be intimate, or spoil the deep friendship that bound Jake and Charley. Therefore I liked Carla, determinedly. It was quite mutual, I think.

While Carla and I were still looking at one another in the first moment of awkwardness Mrs. Gilroy rushed up, seized me dramatically by the hand and kissed me. The action itself was natural enough, but somehow, as Mrs. Gilroy did it, I found it distinctly unpleasant. What curious thing is it in one that closes quickly, as quickly as a sea-creature closes, before too sentimental a greeting?

We went in to dinner then, and gradually the constraint wore off. I was glad to see that Charley seemed to like Carla and they were

presently chattering away at some sort of nonsense.

The dinner was excellent. Carla and Mrs. Gilroy had cooked it together, and they were very sweet to one another, each complimenting the other prettily on her part of it, and deferring elaborately to each other's tastes and wishes. Carla, I think, was genuine enough in this. Her real attention was elsewhere, for she was trying to please Charley and me—for Jake's sake.

But Mrs. Gilroy? I looked at her and I could tell nothing. She was smiling her too-sweet smile, and waiting.

Now that I had time to study her more closely I saw what I had had no chance to notice the night of my wedding; I saw her chin. It was the most curious chin I have ever seen on a human being. It was very small, hardly larger than that of a chimpanzee, but it did not retreat. On the contrary, it was thrust so far forward that she was almost undershot, so that from front view one saw nothing peculiar about her face. But in profile the chin was so short that it extended backward hardly more than

half the usual distance and, instead of being hinged under the ear as chins are normally, it ended on a level with her temple, leaving a hollow below and in front of the ear. She must have formed the habit as a very young child of thrusting her chin forward, so that it never grew properly. The effect was startling, sinister. It was the outward sign of her disproportionate will. I have said she might have produced the stigmata.

So the two women sat and complimented one another sweetly. Between them Jake beamed and waxed loquacious. The dinner progressed.

Presently I asked Carla when they expected to be married. She looked rather prettily confused and answered:

"Very soon, I think. There is no reason for our waiting. We are both old enough to know our own minds," and she turned to Jake smiling.

"And where will you live?" I asked again.

Carla's voice changed ever so slightly, but she answered glibly:

"Oh, we shall have to stay here. I should like a place of my own, of course, but we can't

afford it yet. And in the meanwhile I shall love having mother with us."

There was a pause.

Then Carla went on gayly:

"Jake has promised me I may make the place over a little. This—this is—well, you know, old-fashioned." She smiled again.

I was looking at Mrs. Gilroy as she spoke. Again, as at my wedding when Jake had spoken of marrying, a veil came quickly over her brown eyes. Her curious chin moved slightly, oh, ever so slightly, forward. But she, too, smiled.

"Yes," she said smoothly. "I'm an old woman and my ideas are surely out of date. I shall be glad to have Jake's house put in order."

This time the pause hurt. But Charley broke in cheerily, though his gaiety sounded a little forced.

"I'll tell you what, Jake!" he cried. "Ruth and I will give you all the wedding presents we got and don't want. They'll be plenty to do the whole place over in the best 'Early Pullman and late German-Lloyd' style of decorating."

We laughed and the talk ran smooth again.

But—perhaps because of the child in me—the child that would not lie still—I was restless. I could not rid myself of the sense of something impending, of a flood gathering and swelling far off at the head-waters, as a flood gathers on my Mississippi, swirling and murmuring far away, long before it rushes down in yellow roaring to drown the cattle and eat into the farm lands.

I closed my eyes, and the little clattering dining-room faded away. In its place I saw a hog-pen with savage hogs in it, champing and munching. I saw Jake's face, the face of the hurt boy, and heard his voice, a dull voice like wood beaten, talking. . . .

With an effort I opened my eyes. Jake sat beaming contentedly. He did not hear the head-waters.

The dinner progressed.

CHAPTER X

THE high gods gave Jake another month of freedom. They could afford to wait. Then crisply, with diabolic precision, they announced the *leit-motif*.

It was on the morning after their wedding. They had planned for their wedding journey two weeks among the pines across the lake. But they spent the first night in a hotel in the city.

In the morning the phone in their room rang. Mrs. Gilroy was on the phone.

"Jake," she said. "I wish you to spend the day with me. The wedding has tired me. I am not well."

Jake heard her with a great sinking of the heart. He tried to expostulate. They were taking a boat at noon. If she wasn't really ill——

Her voice came out of the little instrument

smooth, balanced, dropping the words one by one like stones in a quiet pond.

"I am sorry, but I need you. Come at once." There was the little click of a receiver hung up.

Carla, hurt and terrified, protested. She wept.

Jake tried to pacify her. Her tears were salt in his mouth.

But he went to his mother. She kept him two days.

CHAPTER XI

SUMMER on my dunes is at the full. The golden pageant of the dawn and the crimson pageant of the sunset follow one another with swift incredible beauty. Summer storms crash suddenly as a clash of symbols across our skies, passing in beauty over the stirred waters, in lines and spots of green and black and steel blue; and driving fiercely against the boards of our cottage with the clatter of galloping horses. Or the golden flanks of the dunes lie warm, quiescent, oddly virginal under the steady rays of the sun. And at night a newly-minted moon pours molten silver over the little glade behind the shack, till the leaves drip silver in the warm darkness and the wild grape vines trailing from tree to tree are loops and festoons of silver wire.

At night, too, the little creatures of the dunes come down to drink at the lake. If one walks along the wet sand beside the lapping water one

must watch closely not to tramp on the little toads, drinking and bathing after the heat of the day. And if one lies quite still among the logs on the silver beach one can sometimes catch a glimpse of small furry forms that pass like silhouettes in a dream across the silent sands.

In the morning there are histories a-plenty writ in the crisp tracks and patterns that zigzag across the beach and up the dunes. There are the little double tracks of toads, in twos and in platoons, marching and countermarching. There are the big, uneven tracks of jack-rabbits, the pattering tracks of squirrel and mouse and weasel, the odd graceful curves and half moons of snakes. And there are tinier tracks yet, that weave fantastic patterns and lace-like tracery on the unbelievably beautiful texture of the blown sands—the big grasshopper who, when he walks, drags his body after him, leaving a drawn line between the marks of his feet, the water-bugs, big and little, the thousand-leggers, the walking sticks and the locusts. Sometimes there is tragedy in the tracks. The silver beach is a hunting ground for all its peace, and I have seen the fur of a rabbit, in little puffs of tawny

down, beside the marks of a struggle to the death, and a tiny golden bird by the waves' edge, drowned and stiff, its yellow feathers draggled and soiled.

Sometimes the great feet of careless humans come this way, cutting and marring the smooth beauty of the sands. But the dunes are like the Mother of God, their virginity is not to be taken from them, and in a day or two at most the patient sands have filled the tracks and made all clean again. They are no more to be found than the tracks of the Indians who hunted here before us, or of the old hermit who lived here, rambling in mind and in body, and who made the little trail that winds back through the hills and beside the marshes where the golden flowers grow and the wild ducks rise with a great flurry of wings. They are gone, with their careless feet and their red sorrows. Only beauty and the dunes remain.

Betty, whose rounded arms are like a woman's, is keeping a little book in which she writes down the tracks and their meanings. She sits in the little tree-house the children have built for themselves in the branches behind the

shack and pores over its pages, counting and amending her treasures. The boys make fun of her sometimes—their own occupations are more active than reflective—but secretly they are as much interested as she is, and if one of them finds a new track he will always shout excitedly for Betty and offer minute suggestions as to the way it shall be inscribed.

I wish the patterns in sand that humans leave were as simple as these histories of the dunes, and that the book I am keeping this summer could be kept like Betty's book.

For all this is so far from Jake.

I am finding it hard, in this absorbing beauty, to live over those old days, and to be again the old I, so different from the woman I am to-day. My memory, too, has such curious holes in it. Some things I remember with aching vividness, and other things, equally important, equally interesting they must have been, have gone out of my mind completely. I search for them painfully, but all I can find is that they must have been. I sit stubbornly at my window over the blue lake trying to remember, trying to piece together odd little scraps of knowledge—

and only half succeeding. So that I am forced to add to what I am sure of, things I know must have happened. I don't like this. I am afraid by this means that I shall distort the truth, and weave a patchwork pattern that is of my own design, not life's. And if I do that I shall have failed, and my labor will be in vain. I have undertaken to write of Jake in order to be free of Jake in spirit, and only the truth can free me.

The story of Jake's failure is a story made up of trifles, of petty annoyances and gnat-like difficulties that stung and finally destroyed him. He would, I think, have been capable of any single heroic act, but he could not fight a swarm of trifles.

I read a story once of an expedition to Alaska which had not taken account of the mosquitoes. The party consisted of a number of people and was completely equipped, except for mosquito-netting. They got up into the interior, away from help, before the pests arrived. A few days after they came the party started for the coast. But they never reached it. Stung and poisoned every hour of the twenty-four, unable to sleep,

moving always in a cloud of mosquitoes, one by one the men went mad, and either killed themselves or wandered away into the wilderness. One man got back to civilization whole, a young man who for some physical reason was immune to the insects—a true son of Allah he must have been, for the Arabs have a saying that insects do not bite a true son of Allah. With him he brought his chum, who was half-witted from the experience. Jake's story is in some ways not unlike this tale.

In civilization the mosquitoes that drive men mad are pennies. Not by being too many but by being too few. Civilization has a way of reversing the natural order of things.

Jake could, I think, have managed the two women who fought over him as two jealous dogs fight over a bone, if he had had money. With money he could have dressed Carla as she wanted to be dressed, could have taken her regularly to the theater, amused and distracted her. He could have let his mother travel, let her play the lady to her heart's content. There would have been jealousy, of course, but the situation would have been manageable.

But Jake had no money. The salary of a newspaper artist, not the best of the profession, either, is not large enough to give two women everything that woman's heart desires. He worked out of office hours, trying to add to his income. But his health could not stand that.

For another thing, he was always in too much of a hurry to do anything well. It all had to go too quickly. And Jake had in his character a certain lack of attention to detail. He would have been rather impressionistic in his paintings —if he had ever had any time to paint. As it was, almost everything he did was just a little wrong.

He made, I remember, an illustration to accompany a poem I had written. It was a youthful effort which never saw the light of print—and certainly never deserved to. But Jake was struck with it and illustrated it. The poem described a windmill in Holland, turning in the night, its great arms in the darkness turning like some sinister thing of evil, beating like a great bat. The point of the poem, however, was that a tiny light in the mill belied the evil and proved a purpose at work. It belonged to the

Longfellow-Browning tradition of moral optimism, "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world," etc. It's odd to me now that I should have written it. Jake's illustration showed the sinister wings beating very effectively, but he forgot to put in the light!

It was the same way with the other illustrations he made.

Once during the war I undertook to go through the little towns in Illinois and Iowa speaking for war charities. I found myself one afternoon in a little town in Iowa where I knew no one. A local committee had met me and invited me to meet a few women at one of their houses in the afternoon, before the main meeting.

It was a warm summer day. A dozen women sat, embroidering and chatting, while more than that number of children tumbled and played on the floor and on the lawn outside the open windows. I was tired, and ill at ease, amid the local gossip, and I took refuge in the children, who never tire me, and who have no walls that need breaking down before one can be friends with them. A little dark-haired girl

brought out her books to be admired and among them was one of those old books of no real value that somehow in every family escape the rag man. It was like a ghost to me there in that alien place, for it was a book Jake had illustrated in one of his forlorn attempts to make money. The title was something about children from many lands, the verses were very mediocre indeed, sentimental and untrue, and Jake's illustrations were not only poorly done, they were all just a little wrong. His Chinese children were Europeans with impossible slant eyes and clothes that were a hopeless hodge-podge of China, India and Japan; his Alsatian girl had a Norwegian bodice; and his Egyptian peasant child of to-day wore the ancient head-dress of Cleopatra.

I sat looking at it for so long, wrapped in a mantle of memories, that the child grew impatient.

"Don't look at that any more," she commanded. "I have a much nicer one here." So Jake hadn't even pleased her!

It was no wonder then, doing everything in this slip-shod manner, that Jake didn't make

the money he hoped for. He brought home every cent he made; never in his later years sat in on the friendly little poker game on pay nights which was the standard way of keeping money circulating in the newspaper office, and always left his own clothes till the last. Yet even so his salary wouldn't go round.

The main financial difficulty was with Carla.

Mrs. Gilroy had been trained in too hard a financial school not to know the value of every penny. Even after Jake's marriage she used at first to practice all sorts of small economies, made her own clothes, cooked economically, and was satisfied with inexpensive amusements. Almost the only time I ever felt any sympathy for Mrs. Gilroy was when she used to tell of the hardships she and Jake had endured together in the old days in the river town.

"We never had anything we wanted to eat, in those days. Never!" she said vehemently. "We ate rice and oatmeal and potatoes till I thought I could not swallow another mouthful! We had a little cheap meat once or twice a week only. I made everything either of us wore, except shoes. I always walked every-

where because we couldn't afford carfare. I couldn't buy anything, anything, not even a ribbon, to make myself look pretty for Jake, or so that I might have found another husband! Those years were like a nightmare to me!"

This made it easier for me to understand Jake. After such years together——

The gnats stung perpetually in the kitchen. Carla and Mrs. Gilroy quarreled unceasingly about cooking. They were both pretty good cooks, but they differed radically in method. When Mrs. Gilroy gave Jake steak she bought roundsteak and cooked it in drippings. When Carla served it for him she bought porterhouse or one of the very fancy cuts, cooked it in butter and set it on the table with a piece of butter as big as a walnut melted a-top of it. Naturally Carla's results were better. The only trouble was that Jake couldn't afford it. It would astonish most men to know how much money can ooze away by Carla's method, consistently pursued, and they be none the healthier, or much the wiser. But Mrs. Gilroy knew to a penny.

It put her, too, in the unpleasant light of be-

ing perpetually, three times a day, in the rôle of a killjoy, a petty haggler. And Jake ate Carla's dinners with visibly more relish, a thing not to be endured. So gradually Mrs. Gilroy stopped protecting Jake's pocketbook. She learned more expensive ways of cooking, and before the end Jake was eating like a French Marquis, with the two women vying with each other to discover new and exotic dishes. It was delightful, of course, only the gnats were stinging Jake.

It was the same way with clothes, though to a lesser extent. Clothes cost more money in a chunk, and no amount of clever handling could coax money out of Jake when he didn't have it. And I must say for Carla that she dressed exceptionally well for the amount she spent, and always looked like seventy-five dollars when she spent fifty. Only—it was always the same story—twenty-five was all Jake could afford.

Charley and I watched all this through the picket fence, powerless to help. It takes minutes in the telling, and it took years in the doing.

From the fury of the gnats—

"Good Lord, deliver us!"

CHAPTER XII

HARLEY always sympathized with Carla, and liked her—with reservations. She had the same instinctive gaiety that he has and the two could amuse one another endlessly with buffoonery. But I noticed that it was gaiety only in a man that amused Carla. She never played with the children unless Charley was about and dragged them into the game. Jake, on the contrary, gathered up the babies as automatically as I did, and always sat with a lapful.

In the quarrel between Carla and Mrs. Gilroy there was never a moment's doubt of our partisanship, Charley's and mine. From the day Carla came to us—the second day after their wedding it was—with her eyes swollen with tears and her mouth set in a hard line of determination, and told us the tale of the phone message, and that Jake hadn't come back to her yet, we never swerved in our support of her.

Carla, even at her worst, was never malicious, only empty-headed and a little callous, and, at the last when it was too late, curiously loyal.

She really loved Jake, I think—every one who knew him did—and her affection, like ours, grew to be largely maternal. Perhaps this was enough to satisfy the mother in her, for she never wanted children. I remember her saying once,

"I don't want any babies. Jake's enough of a child for one woman to handle."

But in spite of her love for Jake there were moments when she despised him for his weakness. I understood this always. It's one thing to look at a man across a fence and sympathize, and quite another to be married to him.

I don't know much of Carla's background. The only member of her family I ever knew was a sister, a light-head like herself, named Gladys. She was younger than Carla, and prettier, with one of the most beautiful pairs of eyes I have ever seen. They were by nature as starry as a chorus girl's are by art, and she used them with deadly effect. Charley said once that Jake was originally attracted by

Gladys and that the two sisters had deliberately agreed together that he should be switched to Carla. I don't know whether this is true, or only a guess of Charley's. But it would not have been out of character.

Gladys had had, up to the last time I heard of her, about three years ago, a rather agitated career. She married first a novelist, a big, polygamous fellow, with whom she presently agreed to disagree. Of her second husband I only know that he was always in poor health and presently died, leaving the field clear for the third. Of this third I know even less—he was since my day. I only know that he was named Jones and was a traveling salesman. Gladys wasn't happy with him either, it seems. The last I heard of her she and Carla were playing in vaudeville as "The Sunny Sisters!"

I had a glimpse once of the sort of people Carla used to know before she came into our horizon.

On one of Charley's summer vacations after Jake had been married two or three years we went across the lake and took a cottage at a

small summer resort. That was before we knew about the dunes.

J. Carroll Upham was there, with his wife and children. Upham was one of the most amusing people I have ever met, an original from his birth, a writer of fairy tales and musical comedies. He was a tall man about forty at this time, with deep humorous eyes and a twitching mouth. He had had a slight stroke of paralysis on one side of his face, so that his mouth was uneven, drooping at one corner, in which always hung an unlighted cigar. His doctor had forbidden smoking, it seems, but Upham couldn't get along without a substitute. So he took to chewing cigars. Every morning Mrs. Upham laid out on his desk six cigars, his day's ration. He only lit one a day, but by evening the six had been chewed completely.

The one cigar he lit was when he went swimming. He couldn't swim really, but he always solemnly pretended he could. He would come out of the bath-house, light his cigar ceremoniously and wade into the water up to his chin. Then he would walk parallel with the shore, moving his arms as though he was swimming,

and puffing furiously at the cigar which stuck upward from the corner of his mouth. As soon as a wave splashed on the cigar and put it out Upham immediately went ashore, to swim no more that day. He used to complain loudly when the cigar went out too soon to suit him, but he scrupulously obeyed this singular rule.

His cottage was full of objects that he had made "to rest his brain." After the stroke of paralysis his doctor had forbidden him to use his brain for six months at least. This was a real blow to Upham, whose energy was inexhaustible, and he set about to rest it systematically. He designed and built a complete set of hand-made furniture, modified mission style, illustrated on the backs of the chairs with burned and painted scenes from his fairy stories. He made a charming wrought-iron sign for his porch, "At the sign of the Goose." He cut stencils of geese flying and made a border around the dining-room. He scribbled off a little book of verses—"nothing heavy, you know; sort of thing you can do in your sleep"—illustrated them with pen drawings, set the type himself, and bound them by hand. He took the

piano score of one of his favorite musical comedies, and harmonized an elaborate arrangement for his pianola, with cascades of runs and trills. I don't know much about harmony myself, but it sounded very effective to me. Then he took another roll, figured out the system by which they were cut, bought a piece of wrapping paper and, with a penknife, cut his arrangement. After this he told his doctor that he couldn't stand resting his brain another day, and, whether it hurt him or not, he was going to work again!

This summer Upham was working on a musical comedy. He knew Jake, and partly I think because he wanted to give him a lift, he asked Jake to design some stage settings for him. So when Jake had his vacation he and Carla came over and stayed with us, and they worked on the show. Jake's designs were better than most of the things he did, but even so they weren't good enough. And somehow the show petered out, as such things have a way of doing, and after hanging fire in various managers' offices for several years, it died a natural death without ever seeing the spot-light.

It was that summer that I saw the desire stirring in Carla which finally led her to the stage. She admired especially a design of Jake's of the leading lady in a rather gorgeous green and gold gown, and she suggested, half laughing and half serious, that when the show was produced she wanted to play the lead. Jake let her run on, and Upham rather enjoyed kidding her into thinking she could do it. It all came to nothing as I have said, but I think the seed was planted then.

But about Carla's friends.

One evening she proposed that we should all go over to the Beach Hotel Casino and dance. Neither Mrs. Upham nor I cared especially for dancing, but there was nothing much else to do in the evenings. So the six of us went.

Mr. Upham and I were sitting idly watching the crowd, the usual nondescript summer resort crowd, rather hot and sweaty, when Carla and Jake came by. I was just thinking that Carla danced very well indeed when I saw her face go suddenly curiously blank. In an instant the color flushed high in her cheeks, she swung away from Jake and turned to hold out

both hands to a man who likewise dropped his partner and sprang towards her.

He seized her hands, looked down at her with an unendurably possessive air and said in a coarse voice that came distinctly across the hall to us:

"Suffering snakes, Honey. Who'd a thought to pick you up again!"

When Carla had collected herself a bit, she introduced Jake, wished him onto the little lady who had been dancing with her old friend, and started off on this new arm.

He was to me a terrible man. In the early thirties, his face showed already the unmistakable signs of much fast living. He had one of those hard, debauched faces—a type more almost than an individual—with a heavy sensual mouth, dark pouches under the eyes and an impudent stare. He was rather well set up as to figure, but already he was too large about the carefully tailored waistline and too soft in the cheeks.

After the dance Carla came to us in a flutter and explained him to me. He was a very old friend whom she hadn't seen for years. Very

clever. One of the assistant city attorneys of Kansas City. Much political pull, etc. A gay bird, too.

"I nearly married him once," she said, not quite steadily. "He fascinated me, but I didn't trust him. He seems to have gone back, too, since I saw him. He's harder than he used to be. One of my friends told me that he was awfully hard hit by my leaving him and took to drinking too much. And I believe it's true."

She said the last deprecatingly, but with a distinct sense of pleasure showing through the words, as though the thought of her power was pleasant to her. I had my own doubts as to the validity of any such romantic explanation of the owner of that face, but it seemed unnecessary to mention them.

She brought him and the two men with him —birds of an exactly similar feather—over and introduced them to our party. We all went in to have a drink together. It seemed to be the only thing to do.

Jake took it all very pleasantly, smiled at Carla, and listened to her tale tolerantly. I

couldn't see that it troubled him. He trusted her implicitly, I think.

We were all very constrained at first, but after the drinks had gone round a couple of times we attained a sort of unnatural familiarity. I was quite out of my depth, but I did my best not to be a drag on the affair, and succeeded moderately well. Charley threw himself into it, for Jake's sake, I knew, and laughed gayly at the cheap witticisms of the newcomers.

It was a hot night and everybody perspired a good deal.

By and by I began to be distinctly interested, with a touch of nausea to be sure, in the antics of the older of the district attorney's friends. He was a man of perhaps fifty-five, with white hair, a florid complexion, and the eyes of a reptile. He was now busily engaged in getting drunk, a process I had never seen at such close range before. He must have been half drunk when we arrived, for he was very talkative and a trifle unsteady even at first. And gradually he sank to the maudlin stage. He was sitting

beside me, and he leaned over appealingly to me and asked thickly:

"Honey, what's your first name?"

"Suppose," I answered, "suppose you call me Clara."

So he called me Clara ingratiatingly, and began a long story, interrupted now and then by a beery tear, about his old mother at home and her little cottage where the honeysuckle smelled so sweet.

I looked over at Carla and her attorney. They were both very gay, sitting very close together, Carla holding him by the coat lapel, and he fingering her dress. Charley was doing his best to distract Jake, and the third bird from Kansas City was entertaining the Uphams.

The old reprobate by me paid the checks ostentatiously, and I noticed that the waiter, who was evidently accustomed to such parties, brought the same bill twice, and was paid twice. He got away with it so easily that he came back a third time.

But he overstepped the mark. With the quick flare of the intoxicated, the man next me

flew into a rage, sprang unsteadily to his feet, overturning his chair and dragging down part of the tablecloth and half a dozen glasses. He thumped on the table and swore at the waiter, and his voice rose in a siren-like crescendo.

His two friends jumped to restrain him. But they made rather bad work of it, and finally they led him away, still cursing and mumbling.

The district attorney came back alone at last and bade us good-night. Said his friend was suffering from tonsillitis and had taken some whisky to cure it. He wasn't used to drinking much so it had gone to his head. He hoped we'd forgive him.

The party broke up very uncomfortably. Carla especially seemed much disconcerted and explained volubly and continually all the way home, and for some time afterwards, that she had never seen the old man before and that her friend had degenerated considerably. She still found him "fascinating," however.

If that was the background from which Carla came I think she deserves much credit for being what she was.

CHAPTER XIII

THE quarrel between Carla and Mrs. Gilroy developed much as a forest fire develops from a careless camper's fire in the pine woods. It smoldered beneath the surface at first and only an occasional wisp of smoke came up to show where it was leading underground. By the time it broke into the open nothing could stop it.

We knew about it, of course, for Carla saw to that. But Jake tried for years to conceal it, even from us; and when we were present both women maintained a decent decorum that avoided any actual outbreak. Mrs. Gilroy especially, whose histrionic ability was much greater than Carla's—if she had gone on the stage she would have played heavy tragedy—boasted a "company manner" which was really a work of art. She played the old, feeble, loving and abused mother consistently, so consistently that Jake, for whose especial benefit she played,

never really understood how much she exaggerated. Not that her attitude was altogether lacking in justification. There was truth in it undoubtedly. Her situation was not pleasant, look at it as you will. Yet the hypocrisy in which she wrapped herself prevented us from giving her the sympathy she legitimately deserved. Carla was much more frank by nature and found it harder to keep the warfare under cover. The result was that in many small ways Mrs. Gilroy appeared outwardly to be the victim, instead of the aggressor as she really was.

For some time then the quarrel was kept outwardly within bounds. It was, if my memory serves, three or four years before they began to fight in our presence. The first time it happened was on a September evening when we had just returned from our summer camp.

We were very hard up as usual that year and had planned to sublet our apartment furnished during our absence. But Jake's finances were at a still lower ebb, and Charley decided, after much figuring, that we could give Jake the use of it and still scrape through. So we installed them comfortably, hoping vaguely that

by autumn things would have improved for them.

We had a characteristic letter or two during the summer, but Jake's letters were never long on facts and told nothing of the situation, financial or otherwise.

We arrived at four o'clock one afternoon and Jake and Carla met us at the station in high fettle. There was much joshing and merriment, and we all piled into a taxi and drove out to the apartment, where Mrs. Gilroy was waiting for us. On the way out Carla told me their plan for the evening. We were to bundle the children into bed and then the four of us were to go to a theater, and afterwards they would go to the rooming house where they had engaged furnished rooms.

I wished they had consulted me before they planned anything so strenuous, for after traveling the greater part of the day with two very small children I should have preferred bed. Something of this must have showed in my face, for Jake said quickly:

"I hope you aren't too tired, Ruth. I was afraid you might be, but Carla and mother have

dinner all ready, and Carla thought it would do you good to go out. You've been so long in the country."

I braced up, of course, and said I should love to go, and he seemed satisfied.

We had taken our little maid-of-all-work with us to camp, so when we arrived she and I unpacked enough to feed the children and put them to bed, while Carla and Mrs. Gilroy cooked an elaborate and very tasty dinner.

The apartment was in apple-pie order and everything on the surface all serene. But even through the scurry of unpacking I heard that some disagreement was going on in the kitchen, and by the time dinner was served the two women could hardly speak to one another decently. They came to an open rupture, of which I only remember the sense of discomfort, about the dishes in which Mrs. Gilroy had served the salad. And the situation did not improve.

Jake had evidently spruced up for the occasion, for Mrs. Gilroy paused once as she passed him and laid her hand on his head.

"How handsome Lover looks to-night with his new suit on!" she said affectionately.

"Yes," said Carla, with a cutting edge to her voice, "you can see by the excitement he causes at home how seldom the poor boy looks like a gentleman."

Mrs. Gilroy's curious chin moved a little, but she said nothing.

We were all, I think, relieved when dinner was over.

After dinner Jake produced a diversion. The play we were going to see was a melodrama of the most exaggerated sort, given at a little uptown theater. This was for my especial benefit, because, being as I have said a very highbrow young person in my youth, I had only just discovered the peculiar joys of melodrama. Even now I remember with a shock of amusement the first one I saw, though Charley was really afraid, I think, that the simple-hearted audience would mob me for laughing at the tense moments.

Now Jake produced the "dramatic edition" of the play of the evening which he had bought in advance for me and illustrated profusely. I

have the thing yet, and the sight of it brings Jake back completely. It is called "The Girl of the Streets," and there is in it this choice bit:

As in the distance Nan hears Green speaking. "I say, Miss Nan, I'll not say a word if you marry me; your brother will be safe."

She faces Green.

"I hate and despise you, but to save my brother I will marry you."

Then Green, with a triumphant shout, starts towards her. With a scream she jumps back.

"Don't come near me!" she cries. She feels his breath upon her cheek. She runs to the door. With a curse he follows her, only to be met by a blow between the eyes, which sends him sprawling to the floor, while Nan, panting with fear, finds two strong, loving arms around her and Bob's dear voice reassures her.

With an oath Green springs to his feet, drawing a wicked-looking knife as he does so. Nan screams as he rushes at Bob, then closes her eyes. When she opens them a gleaming re-

volver is in Bob's hand and Green is looking into the muzzle of it.

"Let him go, Bob; let him go!" she pleads.

Then Green, with Bob's eyes still upon him, slinks away, muttering threats of vengeance. . . .

Jake has illustrated the gleaming revolver incident, with Green looking into the muzzle of it. So much of the man is in these few hasty lines! The friendly buffoonery that made him do it for me, the sense of the ridiculous that drew Green's hard-boiled eye, the newspaper facility of drawing from which Jake could not escape even when he tried, and the wretched haste with which he did everything—all these are here. And there is for me something more, a little of the futile gusto of a soul in escape, a man who found life too much for him and who fled to this riot of the ridiculous for breath.

The cheap paper is yellow with age now. It crackles in my hand and a musty odor rises from it. The laughter of Jake's escape, too, comes thinly across the years, made ghostly by the

silence in which it rings, like a cricket chirping in December. I think I shall burn the book.

But that evening when Jake showed it to us we all laughed uproariously. Mrs. Gilroy came and looked over his shoulder and laughed with us. When the merriment had subsided Carla said:

"Jake, you had better hurry and take your mother to her room. You'll just about have time to meet us at the theater as it is."

But Mrs. Gilroy set her chin.

"Lover," she asked in her too-sweet voice, "why must your old mother always be put away somewhere when the fun begins? I should like to see the play, too."

There was truth enough in what she said to take us all a little a-back, though none of us, not even Jake, I think, wanted her with us. Before we had recovered ourselves Carla spoke in answer.

"Because," she said crisply, smoothing her silk skirt, "you would spoil the party for the rest of us."

The issue was squarely locked then, and the

two women stood looking one another in the eye like two gladiators.

"My son," said Mrs. Gilroy again, "what do you say to that?"

Jake opened his mouth to speak, to temporize, I am sure, as he always did. But the situation was too uncomfortable for us to endure, and Charley came to his aid.

"Of course, Mrs. Gilroy shall go if she wants to. We can't have anybody left out to-night. Run and put your hat on and we'll all scamper."

But Mrs. Gilroy burst suddenly into a flood of tears. "I, I don't really care about going at all," she sobbed. "I just wanted to see if Jake would let his old mother be so abused. I know I should spoil the party for the rest of you, even if you do say polite things. I,—I wouldn't go now for anything!"

Jake took her in his arms and tried to comfort her while Charley and I stood about making awkward, half-hearted protestations. Only Carla was unmoved.

The upshot of the matter was that although Mrs. Gilroy still refused to go, she did manage

very successfully to spoil the evening. We three went to the theater while Jake took his mother home. He didn't appear till the last act, and he was too disheartened to do more than smile wanly even then. And from the gleam in Carla's eye we saw that there was to be a sequel when he got home.

There was a little sequel for us the next day, too.

In the morning Charley looked through a batch of second-class mail and papers considered evidently too unimportant to forward. I heard him give a sharp exclamation.

"Ruth!" he cried, "look at this."

"This" proved to be a notice from the telephone company, announcing in the curtest possible terms that if our bill was not paid in three days service would be discontinued. The bill enclosed was for the entire summer.

Thus unpleasantly aroused, we looked through the rest of the papers and found a similar welcome from the gas company and the electric light company. There were also bills from one or two of the tradespeople. The rent

was the only bill not represented and that we had paid ourselves.

So Charley spent the rest of the day redeeming our lost credit, which was none too easy as we had come back on a very close tack.

We didn't see either Jake or Carla after that for five or six weeks. When we did they were very airy—or rather Carla was very airy, but Jake looked a trifle uncomfortable.

None of us ever mentioned the bills.

CHAPTER XIV

THE years unfolded slowly, dawn flowering into day and day into dusk, in the lovely static rhythm that holds the stars in place. Night sifted down lovingly about the city, its floating orb reflected a thousandfold in the tiny golden orbs of the street-lamps. The sun crowed with zest in the heavens, and the white stillness at the heart of eternity glowed steadily. The high gods seemed very far.

But all this was obscured for us. The anthill of humanity hummed with labor and the "heat and burden of the day" was upon us. As I look back on these years now I see them as years of action only. We had no time for reflection, even had we wished it. Work fills the noonday and thought the dusk. We lived forward into the future, powerless to see where we were going, powerless perhaps to change direction even if we had seen. Only now the pattern

emerges, only now I know where the day was leading us.

My life, and Charley's, lay in pleasant paths. We had our difficulties, of course, an endless row of obstacles to be clambered over, a sea of underbrush to be cut through. But always love shone like a sun in the heavens and always that sense of exultant amusement rose in me, like a fish striking, when I contemplated Charley. And our seed grew and multiplied upon the earth. After Charley Junior, came Frank, and then, after several years, Betty of the rounded arms.

Charley, who, when we were first married, had been a teacher in a normal school, made a name for himself in biology, and presently, after more than one attempt, founded a school of his own, where he could be rid of the straight jacket of solemnity that always troubles him, and let the high spirits of youth gallop through their studies. The school prospered. Every one loves Charley.

In retrospect, all these years have telescoped themselves in my memory, as quiet years in the same spot on the earth's surface have a way

of doing, into a sort of composite memory of babies, housekeeping and summer vacations in the woods—with one unforgetable winter in China which I can never seem to fit into the rest of my life. There is a warmth, a glow about these memories. I was happy, I know, but in some queer way I can hardly remember the details of that happiness.

My memories of Jake's story are sharper almost than of my own. I am wondering why this is so. Perhaps it is because unhappiness seems more germane to the human spirit than happiness, coming as we do out of darkness and going again into darkness. Or very likely it is because the incidents stood out from their surroundings more completely, were in a measure detached and therefore more sharply etched, because I did not see the thousand gradations of emotion that led up to them and down from them. Whatever the cause the fact remains.

The fight over Jake continued, and grew in intensity.

He stood between the two women whom he loved as a crumbling bank between two parallel streams. They wore him and tore at him, in

floods and freshets. He was continually the buffer between them.

He loved his mother with a love rooted far below the conscious stratum of his mind, a love born in his earliest years and cemented by endless hardships endured together. He loved Carla with a sort of desperation, a dogged faithfulness. And they two hated each other as jealous women hate.

Jake's eyes haunt me, gray eyes that held pain as a well holds water, steadily, completely. His lower lip seemed to grow slacker and slacker as time went on, though its humor held. And his nervous control began to go. He writhed like a tormented animal. But he held on, trying almost hopelessly to reconcile the irreconcilable, hoping that something would happen somehow to make life possible, dividing his small salary and his smaller leisure between them. He pacified one and smoothed the other, he concealed what he could and lied, always inefficiently and against his will, about what he could not. By continually trying to keep from hurting them he succeeded in torturing every

one. He made a hopeless mess of it—but he did his best.

They tried various ways of arranging their living problem. But the gnats gave Jake no rest, and none of the ways were successful. For a while they lived in furnished rooms and ate in restaurants; for a while they boarded, now and again they went back to an apartment. Driven by the restlessness within, they moved often, hoping vainly for relief.

In such a struggle one or the other of the contestants must establish herself as the official or legal consort, and the other must become in some measure, however slight, the clandestine element. Carla, who in spite of her light-headedness, was not by any means weak, succeeded early in the game in giving herself this official standing. She was backed in this unswervingly by all Jake's friends, including, as I have said, Charley and myself. Before long Jake had to steal most of his visits with his mother.

But both the women developed, under the stress of circumstances, an almost psychic power of reading Jake's thoughts, and each other's. So

that subterfuge was nearly always discovered.

Occasionally there was a respite, a lull in hostilities, when Mrs. Gilroy would be prevailed on to visit some one, or to go to the country somewhere "for her health." But even these were not always without incident.

I remember one such evening, when Jake had gone officially to some banquet or other and Charley was away somewhere, Carla and I were sitting together. I was sewing on baby clothes as usual and Carla was strumming on the piano.

Suddenly she struck a jangling discord and spun round on the stool, her eyes narrowed and grown dark, her voice sharp with a wire edge.

"Jake is with that woman!" she exclaimed. "I know it. It just came to me this instant."

She went off to the telephone to do some sleuthing, and came back presently with her mouth set grimly. Poor Jake!

I have said that the gnats destroyed Jake. In a way they did. Yet they were only, after all, the undertone of the affair, the buzzing of the orchestra above which the gaudy pattern of destruction was played.

Mrs. Gilroy supplied the splashes of color,

the high-spots of the drama, with unerring histrionic ability. Her intensity was endless, as was her sentimentality, and her power of seeing herself as a martyr. After the incident of the theater the women gave up trying to hide anything from us and quarreled openly in our presence.

One evening Charley and I happened in at their apartment unexpectedly. As we stood outside the door, my hand already on the bell, a sudden scream broke out from the room within. It was a high, metallic scream, full of exasperation and a wild abandon. We should have slunk away, of course, but I didn't think quickly enough. Under the shock of surprise my hand carried out the action I had already begun and rang the bell.

The scream stopped instantly.

Charley and I looked at one another horrified. After a long moment the door opened and Carla stood there in a white heat of rage and scorn.

"Come in!" she cried fiercely when she saw who it was. "I'm glad to see you. Come in and see what the old she-devil is doing now!"

We followed this pleasant greeting into the parlor.

In the middle of the floor stood Mrs. Gilroy, a veritable Grecian fury, her eyes full of uncontrollable rage, her white hair disheveled and standing out around her face, and her curious chin moving in and out with the nervous rapidity of a humming bird. As we entered she was holding her breath with a violent effort to see what had made the interruption.

When she saw us she relaxed suddenly and began to laugh, a high hysterical laugh, which presently gurgled insanely and went up into another scream.

With a sudden gesture which Jake didn't forestall quickly enough, she threw herself face downward on the floor and began to kick her legs in the air and beat the floor with her hands like an uncontrolled child. She wore black cotton stockings and her withered legs waved ludicrously back and forth.

When we had quieted her a little, had made her lie down and drink some water, and her ravings had become articulate, we found what the trouble was.

Jake had altered the small life insurance policy he carried so that in case of his death Carla might have half the insurance.

How many of these scenes there were I do not know. Many, I judge. We had, of course, only an occasional glimpse into the maelstrom, but Carla talked a good deal.

Mrs. Gilroy's chief card was her health. She was actually not very strong, but even an iron constitution could hardly have stood up under the strain to which she put hers.

She was always threatening to die, and bolstering up her threat by running a high fever. This she could apparently do at will, and it always brought Jake around. He was simply constitutionally unable to stand the strain. It is easy to criticize him for this, but easy also to understand it. She might actually have died —and that would have ended Jake.

Another favorite method of hers was to try dramatically to commit suicide, because "she was an old woman whom nobody wanted, not even her son for whom she had given her life." She made good enough on these attempts so

that no one was ever sure but what she would really do it some day.

Once she butted her head against the wall until she became unconscious.

Another time, in the dead of winter, when it was bitter cold and a wind whipped screaming about the city, she flung herself out of doors without hat or coat. Carla had the upper hand at the time and, almost by force, she restrained Jake from going after her for some minutes. When he finally broke loose and went, he found Mrs. Gilroy in the back yard, where she had flung herself head foremost into a snowdrift. She refused to come in, preferring to die at once to being ruled by that "vampire."

Jake was unable to manage her alone and finally Carla had to come out and the two of them carried her, screaming and struggling, back into the house.

She was in bed for a month after this; and Carla lost much ground by it.

The woman was not, I think, quite sane toward the last. It is more merciful to think of it that way. One doubts the capacity of the

human mind to be quite so uncompromisingly devilish—so long as it is sane.

Jake seemed to have lost all power of independent action by this time. He was just incredibly hurt and gentle. The timbre went out of his voice for weeks together, leaving it dull and hollow, like the sound of wood beaten, like the voice of the hurt boy beside the hog-pen. He would have gone on till doomsday, I believe, trying to bring peace where no peace could be.

It was my Charley who finally ended the battle.

One day Carla came to our apartment with a look in her eyes which I have never quite fathomed, and asked to see Charley alone. They talked for two hours. I have never known what passed between them.

At the end of that time Charley told me in the quiet way he sometimes has, and which is always final, that Mrs. Gilroy was to be sent away.

Charley himself found an institution that would care for her; they invented a ruse to in-

veigle her out of town, and he and Carla took her there and left her.

Jake knew nothing about it till it was all over. When we told him he wept like a child.

CHAPTER XV

IT seemed to us then that Mrs. Gilroy had been eliminated. But we underestimated the high gods. There was one more battle, and in it, by one of those flank movements which delight the designers of fate, she who had apparently lost, tied the issue and came out at last on a par with the victor. Even, I think, in her own mind she triumphed. For so bitter had grown the quarrel between the two women that it had surmounted their love for Jake which prompted it, and to eliminate Carla was more vital to Mrs. Gilroy than to be with Jake.

For three weeks or so after she had been removed we heard nothing from Mrs. Gilroy, not a line, though Jake wrote her imploringly and asked for news.

Carla was radiant at first. She and Jake were living at the time in furnished rooms not far from us, so that we saw a good deal of

them. And while I sympathized with Carla, yet the frankness of her gloating was disagreeable to me. She dragged Charley and me downtown with them to "celebrate" by dinner in a restaurant and a show afterwards. And the sight of Jake, with hanging lip and purple shadows under his eyes, trying to enter into her mood and produce a decent gaiety, struck me to the heart.

But as time went on I could see that Carla was growing restive. One cannot be triumphant forever, and now that she had Jake all to herself he seemed less desirable to her. His weaknesses, which had been so many issues to be met, now became merely so many annoyances. And, having won him, she began to ask herself whether she really wanted him.

She was, in short, in exactly the mood every one felt in France after the armistice. For so many years the war had been a sufficient reason in itself for living that when it was removed we felt suddenly empty and purposeless. Nothing was worth while but change and excitement, and there seemed now no way to procure these. It is a dangerous mood.

Perhaps Mrs. Gilroy was clever enough to calculate on some such reaction. Or perhaps she acted simply out of her own humiliation. Certainly she turned the trick.

One afternoon I had dropped in at Carla's for a cup of tea and had taken the baby with me. The baby just then was Betty. She was still nursing, I remember.

It was a raw November afternoon, already almost dark at four o'clock, with a cold wind and a little drizzle of rain; the sort of afternoon when nerves are taut and blues creep out of the corners of one's mind. Carla was restless and more undisciplined than usual, in spite of the warm room and the tea. She flung herself about, now on the lounge among the pillows, her trim feet in suede shoes and silk stockings patting the cushions, now at the window looking down the cheerless street.

"You know, Ruth," she said once, apropos of nothing at all, "I have half a mind to try going on the stage. J. Carroll Upham has written Jake that perhaps after all that show may go on, and if it does I'd really like to play Moravia. I've always been sure I could act." She

got up and stood before the mirror, examining herself critically and turning from side to side to try this and that pose. "I have an idea I should make a hit."

Betty began to be restless, too, and demanded dinner. So I let her nurse and sat holding her.

There is nothing in the world more heart-satisfying than nursing a baby. I'm genuinely sorry for the men who can't know it! The baby is so warm and soft and primal! It snuggles into your arms with such infinite content and looks up at you with such steady benignity out of its one free eye. When the milk comes too fast it gulps and gurgles frantically and is so provoked to find itself obliged to let go to breathe! Then it falls to again with ferocity and thrusts wee warm fists into your breast, like a cub burrowing under its mother.

I sat holding my own happiness very close and looking out across a great gulf at Carla as she paced uneasily about. Presently she crossed over and stood looking down at me.

"You always seem so quiet and contented!" she said, half provoked and half wistful. "I wish I knew how you do it. I suppose the

trouble with me is that I haven't enough to do. Honestly, there are times when I almost wish the old she-devil were back. At least life was never dull while she was here!"

The answer couldn't have come more pat in one of the plays Carla longed for. At that instant the door opened abruptly and Jake almost fell into the room. His face was a dull gray, framing eyes of torment; his shoulders hung limp and he stumbled as he walked and half fell into a chair.

Carla sprang to him instantly.

"Jake, dear, what *is* the matter?" she cried in a voice of genuine concern.

Jake looked at her helplessly. He must have guessed what was coming, but he got out dully:

"My mother is dying."

The change in Carla was almost terrifying. The look of solicitude vanished instantly and in its place came one of such vindictiveness as I had never seen.

"Huh!" she snorted. "So she's at her old tricks again!"

"But this is not a trick!" Jake countered. "See here," and he thrust a paper into her hand.

I saw it afterwards. It was a letter from the doctor of the institution where Charley had put Mrs. Gilroy, saying that she was very dangerously ill, dying probably, and that in her delirium she called for her son incessantly. The doctor recommended that Jake come at once.

For an instant the letter sobered Carla, but only for an instant.

"That's just like her, with her angel face and her white hair. She'd take in any one who didn't know her. I suppose she *has* a fever! She can have one any time she wants, and you couldn't expect an old fogy doctor like that to be wise to her!"

I had no doubt that there was much truth in what she said, but it didn't make matters easier for Jake. He sat huddled together in his chair, his gray face twitching like a hurt child's and his hands sliding backwards and forwards over his knees. He made no reply to Carla's outbreak, only said in the same dead voice:

"I shall have to go, of course."

"You most certainly will *not!*" snapped Carla.

Neither of them paid any attention to me as

I sat holding my baby. And I sat very still, powerless to help, looking out across the impassable gulf.

Clara's fighting spirit had come back in a flood. Her restlessness was gone and her whole being concentrated on this new attack. But she restrained herself at first and tried practical objections.

"You can't get away from the office now."

Jake didn't answer this, only waved his hand. Carla went on hurriedly.

"You haven't money enough to go. You know we have hardly enough in the house as it is to last till pay day, and half of that is promised to Mayer."

"I can pawn my watch," said Jake. "It wouldn't be the first time. I'll get enough on it." He took it out as he spoke and held it in his hand, a gold watch on a slender chain. It was the only thing of any value Jake possessed. His mother had saved the money to buy it for him before his marriage.

Carla flared up uncontrollably at this. Evidently it was a sore point.

"You will!" she taunted. "You will pawn it

for that old woman when you won't pawn it for me! You'll let me be hounded and annoyed by the tradesmen and humiliated before my friends because you won't get me any money! And all that old she-devil has to do is to give you a cock-and-bull story about dying, and you'll pawn your watch without a word and go chasing off across the country to her!" Her voice had risen to a shrill scream that cut my ears like a saw.

Jake rose unsteadily to his feet. He frightened me. His eyes were bright with pain like a hurt animal's. I took Betty from the breast and laid her down. She began to wail peevishly. Carla paid no attention but swept on, on the tide of her anger.

"Jake Gilroy," she said in a voice of harsh finality, "if this thing is going to begin all over again, if you are going to run to her every time she calls you, I'm through! I've stood all I intend to stand. This is the last straw. I give you warning right now. If you go to that woman I shall never live with you again!"

A curious sort of glaze had come over Jake's bright eyes. He moved his head quickly from

side to side, as though he were trying to shake off something; and he made futile gestures with his hands.

Then suddenly something snapped in him. A furious blind rage shook him as violently as a thunder clap. His whole body shook and trembled and he made maddened, inarticulate sounds in his throat. He raised his right hand menacingly, still holding his watch in it, so that the slender chain dangling from it whipped around his arm.

Carla shrank back in terror. It seemed that he would strike her.

But instead, with a vile oath, the only one I ever heard him use, he flung his precious watch with all his force on the floor and stamped on it. There was a sharp tinkling, crunching sound under his heel, and when he released it a spring popped out and scampered away over the carpet.

For a long instant Jake stood looking at it. Then he burst into a helpless flood of tears and fell back into his chair, burying his face in his hands.

Between terror and pity Carla was softened.

She went over to him and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Poor Jake," she murmured.

But Jake was speaking between his sobs.

"I've got to go. I tell you she's dying!"

The softness passed from Carla's face.

"I'm sorry, for your sake," she spoke quietly but finally, "but you heard what I said, and I meant every word of it. If you go to her, I leave you."

She went out, with a little touch of conscious drama in the set of her shoulders, and closed the door. Betty's fretful wail rose in the silence.

It was I who packed up a few belongings for Jake, and loaned him my housekeeping money.

He went, of course.

BOOK THE FOURTH

DUSK

CHAPTER XVI

JAKE'S mother did not die. "The sight of her dear son gave her courage to go on living," and in a few days Jake was back in the city.

But it was an empty world to which he came back. Carla was as good as her word and had packed up everything of any interest in the household and flitted west to Kansas City where her mother still lived. Her sister Gladys, with the wonderful eyes, was also at home, between the episodes of her second and third husbands, I believe. We heard of them occasionally. Both of them were restless and dissatisfied and evidently flitted about a good deal.

Once a friend of ours who had met Carla at our house reported to me that while he was on a flying trip to Kansas City he had seen her. It was late one night and he was returning from some party or other and waiting on the corner of a deserted street for a car. Carla and a man

passed him, too much wrapped up in each other to see him. The man had his arm around Carla and the pair seemed very well satisfied with the world. My friend was absolutely positive that it was Carla.

Charley and I had an extra bed in our apartment and we took Jake in with us. At first he dragged himself about with a sort of dull hopelessness, but as the months went by his old spirits began to return. Nobody could live long with Charley and remain hopeless! And Charley and Jake really loved one another with a deep, unvarying affection.

Life at our house is always a sort of placid scramble. The placidity is underneath and the scramble on top. Three children of our own and a constant influx of Charley's pupils—who all adore him—keep the surface pretty well agitated, but the undercurrents are deep and changeless. And in this atmosphere Jake began to lose the tragic lines about his loose-hung mouth, and his gray eyes reflected more quiet skies. Looking back on it now I am truly thankful for this respite.

After a while he, too, came home in the

evenings whistling, and his work, which had fallen off in quality, began to pick up again. His sense of the ridiculous rollicked delightfully. I remember that once the paper sent him to New York for a week and he came back in high fettle with a plan for getting the best of the subway, to which institution he had taken a violent dislike.

"You buy your ticket," said he with unction, "then you wait around till there are lots of people going by the ticket chopper at once and he can't pay much attention to you. You sidle up cautiously and drop in your ticket—then you run like the devil so they can't catch you and make you ride on the blame thing!"

I wish I could do justice to this buffooning side of Jake. It is a quality which makes an irresistible companion, but after ten years the aroma of it fades, and having so little of it myself I cannot reconstruct it.

He went periodically to the institution to visit his mother. But, knowing that Charley had had her taken there, he never spoke of these visits to us directly. He was simply "out of town." And though he always returned moody

and listless, we also kept silent. It was no longer our affair.

That winter was the winter of the panic. We weathered it safely but like the rest of the world we had our troubles. In November the bank in which we had our ready money failed. The depositors were paid back a year or so later, so that ultimately we lost nothing by it, but for the moment we were completely strapped. Jake could not help us, for the two women, though they were no longer with him, still demanded money as of old, and he was behind as it was.

Yet Christmas that year was the gayest in my memory. The children were still small enough so that we could satisfy them with a few gaudy but inexpensive toys, and under the spur of necessity we grown-ups evolved a series of comic gifts for each other that set us into gales of laughter. Jake's cartoons of the tribulations of the clan were irresistible.

Christmas eve we lived in a Murger novel. I had been able to get on credit a large and effective Christmas tree, but cash for the trimmings was simply not to be found! We had a few things from the year before and I had strung

popcorn and made paper stars, but we had no tinsel and, what was worse, no candles.

After I had put the children to bed Charley took his hat and with an air of profound mystery went out, leaving Jake and me to trim the tree.

Something in the season, in the feeling of home which he had never had, or in his own essential loneliness, stirred in Jake. He came close to me as I stood disconsolately looking at the poor tree, and leaned over me, his eyes holding mine passionately.

"Ruth," he said, and his voice was husky, "thank God for you. There isn't any too much happiness in the world—but with you to love him a fellow would be as near heaven as any one could get!"

For the first time and only time in our lives there was a tenseness between us, and the air was full of invisible wings beating. Jake took my hand and kissed it.

Then in the silence we heard Charley's key in the door and he burst in, dancing a hornpipe of glee and waving in triumph a bit of paper over his head. It was a dollar bill!

So the three of us went out, whooping arm in arm down the festive streets, and bought candles and tinsel in plenty; and the day was saved, and Jake was once more my brother.

But in March Carla came to visit us.

CHAPTER XVII

THAT visit of Carla's has about it in my mind the curious nightmareish quality that tragedies of the spirit have in our modern civilization. Tragedies of the body have a certain stark validity of their own. Death or serious physical injury stops temporarily the wheels of living; room is made for suffering and a proper stage-setting is provided. High Drama stalks in proper habiliments. But tragedy of the spirit is always sandwiched in between the mechanics of living, between the soup and the meat at dinner, between office hours and the putting of children to bed. Living cannot be halted merely because a soul is in agony, and the slaying of hearts is done anywhere, anyhow, in the leftover scraps of time and strength.

So it is perhaps natural enough that the last torturing of Jake, the supreme suffering that his evil star demanded, should have taken place

in my living-room, in the intervals when I could leave it free, between mealtime and callers and the thousand and one interruptions that come perforce when seven people live in the same small apartment. I did my best to clear the track for him, to give him a fighting chance for his happiness. I could do no more.

This was, I think, the last time a crisis came to him while his apparatus for suffering was still intact, while his capacity was still normal. And yet I wonder sometimes if already something had not begun to disintegrate in him, though we did not suspect it at the time. I shall never know about that. He seemed his usual self.

Carla came then looking very smart indeed, in a green broadcloth suit trimmed with seal, with much fluffy lingerie and a handsome leather traveling bag filled with perfumes, toilet waters and intriguing accessories.

I confess to a purely feminine reaction towards these things. They angered me. Jake had borrowed from Charley more money than we could spare to pay for her visit, money which we knew he would never repay in spite of

his copious promises. And it was a long time since I had had any such accessories myself. Long ago, too, the relation between Carla and me had become decidedly strained. On the surface it continued as before, but underneath there was left only a sense of irritation that threatened at times to break out in a conflagration.

Then, too, a certain hardness that had always been in Carla had been accentuated since we last saw her. She was very airy, spoke calmly of a possible chance of making $200 a week in vaudeville, demanded to be amused constantly, to be taken to expensive restaurants and shows, and smoothed her silken skirts with that irritating little gesture of dismissal more often than ever.

But in spite of all this, Carla came, I am sure, out of the streak of loyalty at the bottom of her character. She came in a genuine attempt to settle her difficulties with Jake and to find some way of continuing her life with him. There can be no doubt that it was an ordeal for her as well as for Jake. Only the poor girl, having determined to give Jake another chance,

didn't know how to go about it, and set the key of the visit in a way which effectively prevented its success.

Looking back on it now I can see that we might have been prepared for what occurred. It had been a long time since she and Jake had seen one another, and after all she had only decided to give him another chance. But we didn't think of it in that light, we three in the city: Carla was still Jake's wife; and it was in that capacity that we expected her. I don't think it occurred to any of us—least of all to Jake—that it might be otherwise.

She arrived about six o'clock in the evening, and Jake, in high fettle and a new suit for the occasion, with a bridal flower in his button-hole and an excited smile on his loose-hung mouth, went off to meet her. He was full of wonderful rosy plans. They would do this and that. He would get a splendid new job. They would be happy ever after. I watched him go with a queer tightening of the heart.

They came back presently arm in arm, and though Jake seemed a little puzzled, he was still in high spirits.

I had put the children to bed early and prepared an extra good dinner, with wine to celebrate the auspicious event. Carla was very fond of wine.

The supper was a great success. Charley and Carla and Jake went off on one of their bouts of nonsense that ride laughing over the universe like Peer Gynt on his shadow horse, and I trailed behind as best I might, happy to see Jake having such a joyous time.

Carla seemed pleased with him, too, and once or twice when he made a particularly amusing sally I saw her looking at him with appraising eyes that were distinctly sympathetic.

But after dinner was over and its exhilaration past, I began to be conscious of an unpleasant constraint in the air. It emanated from Carla, but the rest of us caught it presently, and the talk lost its spontaneity. We began to enquire after Carla's mother and Gladys, and Carla, in her turn, wished to know all about her friends in the city, how Charley's school was going and what the prospects were for the summer camp we were planning for the next summer.

So that when I saw Carla at last make the little preliminary movement which I knew meant that she was going to say that she wanted to go to bed, I was distinctly relieved. As I say, we might have been prepared—but we were not.

What she said, in a hard, clear voice that was almost brittle, was this:

"I think I must retire now, Ruth. But I shall have to ask you to let me sleep alone. I am tired from the journey and I need quiet."

In the silence that followed, the elevated train, passing blocks away, grew painfully distinct. I dared not look at Jake, though I felt him make a sharp movement and then stand quite motionless. And even Charley, whose quick wit usually covers difficult situations so skillfully, had no comment.

The silence grew, and I saw that I must break it. Desperately, thinking of the bridal flower in Jake's button-hole and his hopeful smile—thinking, too, of other practical matters—I tried to shake her.

"It will be very inconvenient, Carla," I said in what I hoped was a matter-of-fact tone.

"The apartment is small, you know, and the beds are limited. It will mean our doubling up most uncomfortably."

"I am sorry," said Carla doggedly, "but I need quiet."

There was nothing for it. "Denial of conjugal rights" is legally permissible, and the matter was out of my hands. So we doubled up. In the two weeks she stayed with us the arrangement was not altered.

Four or five days later Carla spoke to me about the matter directly.

"I'm sorry," she said, "that I can't bring myself to live with Jake. The poor boy's hands are always so hot, and he's always in such a state of nervous tension that he can't think properly. If I could bring myself to it we'd get much further, I'm sure. But, feeling as I do, I just can't do it! It—it would be a sort of prostitution."

So the visit from which Jake had hoped so much turned into a sort of nightmare, a lingering Chinese torture. Charley was away all day but Jake, who was "free-lancing," didn't make the slightest effort to work—and the two spent

a good part of their days in the front room in those endless, milling, altogether useless conversations that lead nowhere. They usually went downtown in the evening, to dinner and a show, and came home late on fairly good terms, only to begin again cold the next morning.

Sometimes they called me in, hoping apparently that an outsider would help clarify matters. It was always the same story, going over and over again the old sources of discord, chewing the cud of old bitterness. Jake did at times try to paint a glowing picture of their life together in future, but Carla always pricked the bubble by asking dryly where he was going to get the money to do these things and reminding him that even though his mother was in an institution he was still sending her money. And so the recriminations began again.

The conversations all ended the same way. Carla declared that she was tired of being annoyed by all this bickering, and she smoothed her skirts and told Jake she wanted to go out somewhere.

I was powerless to help and very busy on my own account, with three small children and only

one inefficient Slavic maid, so I presently stopped trying to patch matters, avoided the front room, and took refuge in my babies, who are always a cure for complexes. In the evening when Charley came home, even if Jake and Carla had not gone out, matters were more cheerful, and we managed to stay on the smooth surface of things.

And Jake endured as best he might the progress of the nightmare. He stuck to his old method of trying to soothe Carla and coax her into a good humor. Charley advised him strenuously one day to end the nonsense, take her by the scruff of the neck, metaphorically speaking, and wipe up the floor with her. It was, I think, what Carla had been hoping in some undefined way would happen. But though Jake approved in theory the poor boy had nothing of the sort in him.

Slowly the conclusion forced itself on Charley and me that no good could come of this—that it would get nowhere. Yet day by day the tension grew. Day by day Carla grew harder and the lines of discontent about her mouth more sharply cut. And day by day Jake

grew more desperate. The thing could not go on much longer. Something we felt had to snap. We hoped at last that it would be Jake's affection for Carla. But again we underestimated the gods.

Late one afternoon I saw what was going to break.

Carla and Jake had had a particularly long and bitter siege. Since lunch time they had sat together in the living-room, their voices going on and on monotonously, sometimes in a high pitch of exasperation, sometimes arguing with steady, forced patience, but always going on. It seemed to me incredible that human beings could continue to hurt one another so.

It came Betty's bedtime at last and I undressed her and laid her in her crib in the darkened bedroom. As I stood beside her, holding her bottle in the lull that comes then, I noticed that Carla's voice had grown sharper than ever. Even through the closed doors, though I could not distinguish the words, the tone of it had a rasping finality that I had heard before. I held my breath to hear Jake's answer.

But it didn't come. Instead, I heard his feet

beating unsteadily down the hall, and suddenly the door of the bedroom burst open and he almost fell into the room, holding his hands before him in the semi-darkness and blundering into the furniture.

"Jake!" I whispered, terrified.

He didn't answer, but he came directly to me, threw his arms convulsively around my neck and burst into a wild passion of tears. He had abandoned himself utterly. It seemed that he was breaking to pieces in my arms.

When he had grown quieter and lay face downward on the bed, stifling his sobs in the pillow so Carla could not hear them, he began to speak between sobs.

"She won't let me cry there," he got out. "She says she didn't come here to be harrowed and that if I make a scene she'll leave to-night."

He sobbed on heavily, desperately. His very toes shook.

"She wants me to be gay!"

Again the horrible sobbing. He was holding my hand and he gripped it with a hard, convulsive pressure every time a paroxysm shook him. And he cried again, a great agonizing cry,

"Great God, she's killing me!"

Then he lay still, so that a cold terror shook me.

But he began to sob again, more quietly, diminuendo. And more quickly than I could have expected the storm subsided. He stifled his sobs at last. He sat up and wiped his eyes, smiled a watery twitch at me and got out:

"Forgive me for making a fool of myself!"

Then he gathered himself together, inch by inch, as a man must gather himself together to meet the gallows, and went out again to Carla.

In a moment I heard him laugh shakily, and Carla's cold voice tittering in answer.

Twenty minutes later he was again lying on my bed, sobbing into the drenched pillow.

CHAPTER XVIII

THERE stood a castle once in northern France, a huge castle, strong and beautiful, with bastions like the hills from which it rose and room for thousands of retainers in its spacious courts and buildings. Le Château de Coucy was the name of the castle, and its Sires were lords of all the region.

When the crusades were stirring in men's hearts the Sire de Coucy bade farewell to his lady and set out with a great retinue for the Holy Land, and was gone many months. And it came to the ear of the Sire that his lady, who was young and full of life, had taken another in his place while he served the Cross. So the Sire caused that other to be killed and his heart to be cut out. And he pickled the heart in vinegar.

When he returned to his castle, stern and bronzed, his trembling lady met him and bade him welcome. And the Sire ordered a great feast in honor of his return and he offered his

lady a new delicacy of the East, a pickled heart. But when the lady had eaten he told her harshly that it was no heathen heart, but the heart of her own lover which she had found so nourishing.

The lady grew very white and still, and she said, "It shall be the last morsel of food to pass my lips." She went away to her chamber and day by day she grew more white and still, till at last they buried her and she was troubled no more.

But the Sires of Coucy flourished, and grew arrogant, so that they defied the King of France. And for a long time they could not be subdued. But at last their arrogance brought about their own end, so that the great castle was taken, and its bastions broken and the retainers killed. The centuries settled down over Coucy le Château and ate away the walls and crumbled the broken bastions, and many green things clambered over the piles of stones.

But it all takes time, it goes very slowly. Even an old enemy who took the ruins in our day did not finish it, though he blew up with dynamite all the little houses that clustered on

the hill, and destroyed the chapel and made new raw breaches in the crumbling walls. Still something stands of the dying castle that cannot die, cannot sink back utterly into the earth. And there is beauty round it as it dies; it disintegrates graciously, filling the years with a pleasant melancholy.

Beauty is in itself redemption. The beauty of Coucy le Château through the centuries redeems the violence and the wrongs of its feudal days. The wraith of the still white lady sleeps.

But man, who makes castles, disintegrates badly. There is no beauty about his crumbling. The scars of his wars are ugly scars, and no green hope of spring clambers over his ruins.

Man's beauty is in living. We can only cover with silence the hurt of his disintegration.

Yet I should like to have you know a little of how the darkness came upon Jake at last, the darkness which he had brought upon himself. It came slowly, over how long a time I do not know, hastened by what factors I cannot say. I can only record what I saw.

After Carla left he sank into a bog of apathy from which nothing seemed to rouse him. He

was very gentle and accommodating. He worked patiently, he helped me with my babies, he sat long hours doing nothing. But something was gone in him. He had no reason for living any longer; he seemed only to be waiting, but for what he waited he could not have told you. He did not know, I think, that it was death for which he waited. Nor did we.

Spring brought him no restlessness. He was glad when it grew warm enough to sit outdoors, but that was all. And he began to distrust his own mind.

One afternoon he had been working at home on a sketch. Towards dark he called me over to look at it.

"Ruth," he said in a queer, troubled voice, "does this make sense? I thought it did when I started it, but now I'm not sure it does. There's something dull in my head to-night."

I looked at the sketch. It was a book-plate for one of his friends, a woman sitting reading on a bench, under a spreading tree. It "made sense." When I told him so he was reassured, like a child.

But I was troubled, and when it came time

for Charley and me to go to our summer camp we hated to leave him alone. But we could not carry the entire financial burden of another person, and Jake seemed able still to care for himself. We did not know then what we know now.

So we found him a cheerful furnished room, made what arrangements we could, and left him. Just before we went his mother died in the institution. That, at least, was a relief.

The camp was a real success, and we had a wonderful summer, filled with hard work and even more strenuous play. The woods were glorious and we loved the lively lads who found life so full of zest.

But we were troubled about Jake. Only once we heard from him, though Charley wrote often. It was a rambling letter that troubled us still more. And once a friend wrote that Jake had "grown very irresponsible."

But it was not till we returned in the autumn and found Jake gone that we heard the details of what had happened. He had disintegrated rapidly after we left. There had been several

painful incidents before his friends realized that he was failing.

Once he had gone into his old newspaper office and told the boys in the art room the story of his misfortunes and that he was absolutely penniless. Every one liked Jake and the boys had made a collection—$37 it was I believe—to tide him over. He left with tears of thankfulness.

In two hours he was back with his arms full of sheet music, the scores of Wagner operas and Beethoven symphonies, and all the latest songs. He told the boys how much he had wanted these songs all his life and how grateful he was to them that he could have them.

Another time he went into an expensive restaurant, ordered an elaborate meal and when he had finished it called the waiter and told him that he had no money to pay for it, but he was sure they would understand that an artist must eat. The restaurant-keeper did not understand, and Jake was arrested.

His friends saw then that something must be done. They had him examined by a doctor who spoke learnedly but vaguely, and said

it was too early to be sure just what he had. He suggested rest, out of the city, till they knew more definitely.

So when we got back to the city Jake was not there, but at a rest house somewhere waiting for the definite diagnosis that would put him in a state institution for incurables. Reports as to his condition were discouraging.

Then it was that the strange thing happened to Carla. She who had hurt him so incredibly flew like an angry mother hen to his rescue when once she knew that his mind was going. All her old love for him, which had always been more mother than mate love, came back in a flood, filling the little salty runways, the bitter stagnant pools and the arid stretches that made up her world, as the tide floods a marsh. All the bitterness towards him, the scorn of his weakness, faded away and was gone. He was ill, he was utterly alone, and he needed her. Everything else was forgotten as dreams are forgotten on waking. So, losing his mind, Jake found his wife again.

At first it seemed incredible to me that this

should be. I did not see it happening to her. I saw it only completed, a miracle of the spirit. Yet, looking back, I saw that the possibility had always been there. Carla loved a fight. The fight with Mrs. Gilroy had held her to Jake for many years. Now she had the whole world to challenge for his sake, and the world was a more worthy opponent than one old woman. And to uphold her Carla found a revelation. She had never had any resources in herself and when enlightenment came it filled her completely, so that she leaned on it and felt herself master of fate. Her very light-headedness and lack of all spiritual analysis helped her. She was like a person who gets religion at a revival meeting, and the religion she got was mother love.

One evening soon after we returned she stood on our doorstep blazing with defiance, with mother-love, with triumph. Had it not been for her body I should never have known her.

With her she brought Jake, seemingly in his right mind, gentle and clinging as a child, and very, very happy.

"I stole him away!" cried this new Carla

whom I did not know. "I stole him from the rest house after those fool doctors had decided he must be shut up till he died. I stole him the night before he was to be sent away. I got a carriage and I came under his window and called. And he clambered down to me. We rode for hours, and I hid him at a farmhouse for a week, nursing him. See, he is well now, as well as he ever was! It was wicked of them to say his mind is going. He has nothing the matter with him, nothing but a fear-thought held by the foolish doctors. And I have driven that away. It is quite, quite gone. And he will work again, and we will be happy!"

Jake smiled and nodded. He seemed his old self again. Only gentler, and happy. How long was it since he had been happy?

Carla talked and talked, in a passion of defiance and of triumph.

"It came to me as a revelation," she said. "I felt that it was wrong, but I didn't see how. And then I met a woman, a New Thought healer, and what she said was like opening a door in a dark room and letting in the light. 'They say his brain is going,' she said, 'but

And we lost track of Carla, the old Carla who returned again when revelation failed. It was many years ago, and if there was more to her story the threads have gone out of my hands. She is no longer young. She can hardly be in vaudeville now.

Perhaps they buried Jake with his mother. He loved her to the last.

CHAPTER XIX

AUTUMN has come to my dunes. The air is crisp now and the wind blowing from the lake has an edge of chill. The fish in shoals have turned shoreward from their summer hunting grounds far out, and with them have come the gulls. All day now they wheel and scream before the shack, or parade in their solemnly comical fashion at the water's edge. The blue heron, too, has grown bolder and often we see his great track before the house, or catch a glimpse of him flapping heavily by; and the marshes are alive with ducks and wild geese, stopping on their journey southward.

The incredible beauty and pageantry of autumn is over the earth in a mad riot of crimson and yellow, brown and green. The unspeakable loveliness, the ecstasy of beauty which is at the

heart of death is with us—of death which is not the enemy.

My task is finished. I have faced the story of Jake, and I have dwelt with pain. His presence, as a wraith, a minor song, the shadow of his gray eyes that held mirth or sorrow as a well holds water, steadily, completely—these things have been with me these long months. Yet looking at the words I have written, at the little scratches of black and white that remain, I know that I have failed, that I have not imprisoned the nameless thing I feel.

Yet I have done my best, and for myself I have gained release. The gentle spirit of Jake will rest now and cease to trouble me. There is no answer—for me there is no answer—to pain but courage, but the pitiful and beautiful facing of it by the human soul, that conquers by enduring. There is no answer—yet to know this is in itself release. So Jake can sleep now.

And life goes on. Charley has come to take us back to the city again. He and the children are splashing for the last time in the creaming breakers. Betty throws up her rounded arms and squeals with chilly pleasure. I must make